



Lesson 9

What Does God Expect of Me?

Apologetics Press Introductory Christian Evidences Correspondence Course

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF ME?

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

Of all the living creatures that dwell on planet Earth, only one being was made “in the image of God.” On day six of creation, God said: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

MAN’S PREDICAMENT: DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH

Unfortunately, the first man and woman used their freedom of choice to rebel against their Maker. Man made some horribly evil choices, and thereby entered the spiritual state known in the Bible as “sin.” The Old Testament tells of the entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). It also includes the fact that every human after Adam and Eve has sinned: “There is no one who does not sin” (1 Kings 8:46). The prophet Isaiah told God’s people: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (59:2).

The New Testament is just as clear in its judgment of sin as the Old Testament. The apostle John wrote: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Thus, sin is defined as the act of breaking God’s law. In fact, Paul said: “Where there is no law, there is no transgression” (Romans 4:15). If God had not made any law, there would have been no sin. But God **did** institute a divine law. And mankind freely chose to **break** that law. Paul restated the Old Testament idea that all men are sinners when he said: “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

As a result of sin, mankind’s dilemma became extremely serious. Ezekiel the prophet cried: “The soul who sins shall **die**” (18:20a). Once again, the New Testament writers agree with the Old Testament. Paul wrote: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and **death** through sin, and thus **death** spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Then he added that “the wages of sin is **death**” (Romans 6:23). James also wrote: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth **death**” (1:14-15).

As a result of mankind's sin, God placed the curse of death on the entire human race. While all men and women must die **physically** as a result of Adam and Eve's sin, each person dies **spiritually** for his or her own sins. Each person is responsible for himself, spiritually speaking. The theological position which states that we inherit the guilt of Adam's sin is false. We do not inherit the **guilt**; we inherit the **consequences**. And there is a great difference between the two.

Consider, as just one illustration of this point, the family in which a drunken father arrives home late one evening, and in an alcoholic stupor severely beats his wife and children. They thus suffer the consequences of his drunkenness. But it would be absurd to suggest that they are guilty of it! The same principle applies in the spiritual realm. People do die physically because of Adam's sin, but they die spiritually because of their own personal transgression of God's law. In Ezekiel 18:20, quoted earlier, the prophet went on to say: "The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

Regardless of how desperate, or how pitiful, man's condition has become, one thing is certain: God did not **have** to provide a means of salvation for ungrateful humanity who turned away from Him, His law, His love, and His mercy.

Why, then, would God go to such great lengths to save mankind from sin? Whatever answer(s) may be given, there is no doubt that the Creator's efforts on behalf of sinful man are the direct result of pure love. As a loving God (1 John 4:8), He acted out of a genuine concern—not for His own desires, but for those of His creation. Let us be honest in admitting that God's love for mankind was **completely undeserved**. The Scriptures make it clear that God decided to offer salvation—our "way home"—even though we were ungodly, sinners, and enemies (note the specific use of those terms in Romans 5:6-10). The apostle John rejoiced in the fact that: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10).

God's love is universal, and He does not discriminate in any fashion (John 3:16). He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)—if they choose to be (John 5:40)—for He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). And, His love is never ending. Read Romans 8:35-39 and be thrilled! God offers this love to all people, yet some stubbornly choose to rebel against Him and to refuse His wonderful love.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION—IN ACTION

One of God's qualities is that He is an absolutely **holy** Being (see Revelation 4:8; Isaiah 6:3). Since He is holy, He cannot, and will not, ignore the fact of sin. The prophet Habakkuk wrote: "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on perverseness" (1:13). Yet another of God's attributes is that He is absolutely **just**. Righteousness and justice are the very foundation of His throne (Psalm 89:14). The truth that arises from the fact that God is both holy and just is that **sin must be punished!**

If God were a cold, vengeful Creator (as some infidels wrongly assert), He simply could have banished mankind from His divine presence forever and that would have been the end of the matter. But the truth is, He is not that kind of God! Our Creator is loving (1 John 4:8) and "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). Thus, the problem became one of how a loving, merciful God could pardon rebellious humanity?

Paul addressed this very subject in Romans 3. How could God be just, and yet a justifier of sinful man? The answer: He would find someone to stand in for us—someone to receive His retribution, and to bear our punishment. That "someone" would be Jesus Christ, God's Son. He would become a substitute sacrifice, and personally pay the price for human salvation. In one of the most moving tributes ever written to the Son of God, Isaiah summarized the situation like this: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6).

God's intent was to extend His grace and mercy freely—through the redemptive life and death of His Son (Romans 3:24-26). As a member of the Godhead, Christ took upon Himself the form of a man. He came to Earth as a human being (John 1:1-4,14; Philippians 2:5-11), and shared our full nature and life-experiences. He even was tempted in all ways, just as we are, yet He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

God's Plan of Salvation—What Mankind Must Do?

As wonderful as God's gift of salvation is, there is one thing it is not. **It is not unconditional.** Mankind has a part to play in this process. While the gift of salvation itself is free (in the sense that the price already has been paid by Jesus Christ), God will not force salvation on anyone. Rather, each man or woman must make his or her own decision to accept the pardon that heaven offers. What is that "something" that mankind must do to receive God's forgiveness and salvation?

In His many dealings with mankind, God repeatedly stressed that if man wants to be justified, he must live “by faith” (see Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 10:38; 11:6). Salvation has been available across the centuries, yet “living by faith” never has meant just a “belief” in certain facts. Instead, “living by faith” means **active obedience**.

Faith consists of three things: (1) an acknowledgment of historical facts; (2) a willingness to trust the Lord; and (3) a wholehearted submission (obedience) to divine will. Furthermore, we should remember that submission has not always required the same things. It always has required obedience, but obedience itself has not always demanded the same response.

For example, in God’s earliest dealings with humankind, obedient faith required that men offer animal sacrifices at the altar (Genesis 4:4). Later, God gave the Law of Moses to the nation of Israel (Exodus 20). Under that law, animal sacrifices continued, along with the observance of certain feast days and festivals. Acceptable faith, under whatever law that was in force at the time, always has demanded obedience to the will of God.

The Scriptures are clear that “obedience of faith” is based on the Word of God, and that the faith and the obedience are demonstrated by action. Hebrews 11 is an example of an entire chapter devoted to discussing faith and obedience. “By faith” Abel offered. “By faith” Noah prepared. “By faith” Abraham obeyed. “By faith,” Moses refused. And so on. Even a casual reader cannot help but be impressed with the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11:32-40, and the **action** they took because of their **faith**. Writing by inspiration, James observed that faith, without obedience, is dead (2:26). What, then, is involved in this “obedience of faith” in regard to salvation? What must a person today do to be saved?

Several critically important questions need to be asked here. First, where is salvation found? Paul told Timothy: “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain **the salvation which is in Christ Jesus** with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10).

Second, where are all spiritual blessings found? They are found only “in Christ.” Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**.”

Third, and most important, how does one get “into Christ”? In other words, how does the sinner rid himself of his soul-damning sin? What “obedience of faith” is required in order to obtain the free gift of salvation that puts him “in Christ”?

The Road Home: Salvation Through “Obedience of Faith”

The only way to find the “road home” to heaven is to follow God’s directions **exactly**. There are certain things God has commanded that people today must do in order to receive the free gift of salvation via the “obedience of faith.” According to God’s Word, in order to be saved a person must do each of the following.

First, the sinner must **hear** God’s Word (Romans 10:17). Obviously, a person cannot follow God’s commands if he has not heard them, so God commanded that people hear what He has said regarding salvation.

Second, one who is lost cannot be saved if he does not **believe** what he hears. So, God commanded that belief in Christ is necessary for salvation (John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

Third, one who is lost cannot obtain salvation if he is unwilling to **repent** of his sins and seek forgiveness (Luke 13:3). Repentance means that a person is genuinely sorry for his sin, and that he stops doing what he knows is wrong and starts doing what he knows to be right.

Fourth, since Christ is the foundation of our salvation, God commanded the penitent sinner to confess before men a belief in Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10).

However, this is not all that God commanded. Hearing, belief, repentance, and confession—as important and as essential as they are—will not rid a person of sin. The most important question is: **How does a person get rid of sin?** Many times within the pages of the New Testament, that question is asked and answered. The Jews who had murdered Christ asked that question. Peter’s sermon had convicted them. They were convinced that they were sinners and desperately in need of God’s salvation. Their question was: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter’s response could not have been clearer. He told them: “Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:38). Saul, who later would become Paul, the famous apostle to the Gentiles, needed an answer to that same question. While on a trip to Damascus to persecute Christians, Saul was blinded (read Acts 22). Realizing his plight, he asked: “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10). When God’s servant, Ananias, appeared to Saul in the city, he answered Saul’s question by commanding: “And now why are you waiting? Arise, and **be baptized, and wash away your sins**” (Acts 22:16).

What, then, is the correct, biblical answer regarding how one rids himself of soul-damning sin? The biblical solution is that the person who has heard the gospel, who has believed its message, who has repented of past sins, and who has confessed Christ as Lord, must then—in order to receive remission (forgi-

veness) of sins—be baptized. [The English word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*, meaning to immerse, dip, or plunge beneath or under.]

Further, it is baptism that puts a person “in Christ.” Paul told the first-century Christians in Rome: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized **into** Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). Paul told the Galatians: “For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ” (3:27). Little wonder, then, that Peter spoke of baptism as that “which saves” (1 Peter 3:21).

Several New Testament writers made the point that it is only when we come into contact with Christ’s blood that our sins can be washed away (Ephesians 1:7-8; Revelation 5:9; Romans 5:8-9; Hebrews 9:12-14). The question arises: **When** did Jesus shed His blood? The answer, of course, is that He shed His blood on the Cross at His death (John 19:31-34). Where, and how, does one come into contact with Christ’s blood to obtain the forgiveness of sin? Paul answered that question when he wrote to the Christians in Rome. It is only in baptism that contact with the death, and therefore the blood, of Christ is made (Romans 6:3-11). Further, the ultimate hope of our resurrection—to live with Him in heaven—is linked to baptism. If we are not baptized, we remain in sin. If we are not baptized, we have no hope of the resurrection that leads to heaven.

Baptism, of course, is no less, or more, important than any other of God’s commands regarding what to do to be saved. But it is **essential**, and one cannot be saved without it just as one cannot be saved if he does not believe or repent. Is baptism a command? Yes (Acts 10:48). Is baptism where the remission of sins occurs? Yes (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Some, who no doubt mean well, teach that a person is saved by “faith only.” People are taught simply to “pray and ask Jesus to come into their hearts” so that they might be saved from their sins. This teaching is completely at odds with the Bible’s specific instructions regarding what one must do to be saved.

First, the Scriptures clearly teach that God does not hear (that is, hear to respond with forgiveness) the prayer of a lost sinner (Psalm 34:15-16; Proverbs 15:29; 28:9). Thus, the sinner can pray as long and as hard as he wants, but God has stated exactly how a person is to be saved. This makes perfect sense, since in John 14:6 Jesus Christ taught: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.”

Second, the Scriptures plainly teach that man cannot be saved by “faith alone.” James, in his epistle, remarked that a man may be justified (or saved), but “not by faith only” (2:24). [It also is interesting to note that James 2:24 is the only time that the Bible uses the phrase “faith only,” and there it is con-

demned.] This, too, makes perfectly good sense. As James had observed only a few verses earlier: “You believe that there is one God; you do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble” (2:19). It is not enough merely to believe. Even the demons believe. But they hardly are saved (see 2 Peter 2:4). It is obvious, therefore, that faith alone is not enough to save mankind.

[While we are discussing individual responsibility as it relates to salvation, it needs to be noted that the Scriptures teach that there are certain individuals who are in a “safe” condition before God because of their intellectual inability to build and maintain an obedient faith. Innocent children (Matthew 19:14) and those who are mentally incompetent (James 4:17) would fall into this category.]

CONCLUSION

The biblical message—from Genesis to Revelation—is that man is in a sinful state and desperately in need of help in order to find his way “back home.” God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11), and genuinely desires that all should be saved (John 3:16). But in order to be saved, one must do **exactly** what God commanded, in **exactly** the way God commanded it. When a person hears, believes, repents, confesses, and is baptized for the forgiveness of his sins, that person becomes a Christian—nothing more, and nothing less. God Himself then adds that new Christian to His Son’s one true body—the church. The child of God who remains faithful—even unto death (Revelation 2:10)—is promised a crown of life and eternity in heaven as a result of his faith, his obedience, God’s mercy, and God’s grace (John 14:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 1:5). What a joyous thought—to experience the “abundant life” (John 10:10b) with a “peace that passes understanding” (Philippians 4:7) here and now, and then to be rewarded with a home in heaven in the hereafter (John 14:2-3). What a joyous thought indeed!



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Questions—Lesson 9

TRUE OR FALSE

Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks before the following statements.

- _____ 1. Mankind was created in the image of God.
- _____ 2. Jesus Christ was almost perfect, but even He sinned.
- _____ 3. The result of sin is death.
- _____ 4. God was forced to provide a way for mankind to be saved.
- _____ 5. God's gift of salvation always is unconditional.
- _____ 6. A person does not have to believe in Jesus to go to heaven.
- _____ 7. All a sinner has to do to become a Christian is to pray for forgiveness of his past sins.
- _____ 8. A person does not have to be baptized in order to be saved.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer(s).

- 1. Which of the following is **not** a reason God provides salvation for man?
 - (a) He loves mankind
 - (b) Mankind needs salvation
 - (c) Mankind deserves salvation
 - (d) He is merciful and kind
- 2. Which of the following is **not** necessary to receive salvation?
 - (a) Baptism
 - (b) Confession
 - (c) Donating lots of money to the church
 - (d) Repentance
- 3. Mankind was created in whose image?
 - (a) Angel's
 - (b) God's
 - (c) Animal's
 - (d) Satan's
- 4. How does the Bible say that a person gets into Christ?
 - (a) Performs a miracle
 - (b) Prays
 - (c) Pays money
 - (d) Is baptized

5. Salvation is found only in which of the following?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| (a) Jesus Christ | (b) Buddha |
| (c) Muhammad | (d) Krishna |

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Unfortunately, the first man and _____ used their freedom of _____ to rebel against their Maker.

2. As a result of _____, mankind's dilemma became extremely _____.

3. God's _____ is universal, and He does not _____ in any fashion (John 3:16).

4. Since God is _____, He cannot, and will not, ignore the fact of _____.

5. The only way to find the "_____ _____" to heaven is to follow God's _____ exactly.

COMPLETE THE BIBLE VERSES

(New King James Version)

1. "And the Lord God _____ man of the dust of the ground, and _____ into his nostrils the breath of _____; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

2. "There is no _____ who does not _____" (1 Kings 8:46).

3. "The _____ of sin is _____" (Romans 6:23).

4. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord _____ Christ, who has _____ us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in _____" (Ephesians 1:3).

5. "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be _____ in the name of _____ Christ for the _____ of _____'" (Acts 2:38).

NOTES/COMMENTS

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