

What Must I do to be Saved?

Of great importance to Christian thought is salvation. Many teachings in Christianity confidently state “you are saved”. However, there are different teachings on the answer to “What must I do to be saved?” Some proclaim that all you must do is believe in Jesus Christ and that he died for your sins and you are saved. I suggest there’s more to it than that. A major theme of the Bible is that God is holy and instructs us to be holy as He is holy. What does this have to do with salvation? Let’s see what the God’s word says about this topic.

What does the Bible say about God? It says He is holy. (Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, I Peter 1:16) The Hebrew word holy is “quodesh” meaning apartness, separateness, sacredness. Everything about God is holy; His habitation, his words, his Sabbaths, his name. He does not bend or conform to our ways. His way is the way of righteousness. He is separate from mankind because He is holy and does not dwell with sin or unrighteousness. Isaiah 59:1 says “our sins have separated us from God, so that he will not hear us.”

However, this is not God’s desire. God’s desire was for Israel to be a holy nation. (Ex. 19:6) He gave them his laws, his statutes and judgments, His Word, to instruct them in holiness. He wanted them to be able to distinguish between the holy and unholy and the clean and unclean. (Lev. 10:10) After giving the laws of clean and unclean animals, God instructed, “For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth...you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”.

God then gave many instructions dealing with such things as His holy days, leprosy, bodily discharges, the sanctity of blood, and laws of sexual morality. Again He states, “therefore you shall keep my ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, that you do not defile yourselves by them. The nations around them had laws and rituals that were in service and honor to their gods. But the God of Israel instructed his people to do differently. I am YHWH your God. Say to the congregation of Israel, ‘you shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy’” (Lev. 13-18). They were to believe and obey God’s words. This has been God’s intent for his people always.

Again he gives more instructions on moral and ceremonial laws and then says, “Set yourselves apart for the LORD, and be holy, for I am YHWH your God”. (Lev. 20:7) All of God’s instruction was about teaching us to become holy and to learn to separate and distinguish between the holy and the unholy. If we are to be holy as God instructs, we must hear His words and be separate from the sinful world around us. In Lev. 20:26 He said, “you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.” We cannot decide what is holy, God instructs us in holiness and our choice is to obey and become holy. Deut. 23:14 says “For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”

Paul also spoke of being holy and separating from the unclean. He says in 2 Corinthians 6:16-17:1 “for you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God and they will be my people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate’, says the LORD. ‘Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be My sons and daughters’, says the LORD

Almighty.” Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Here Paul quoted Ezekiel 37: 26-27 and Isaiah 52:11 to relay that God’s instruction and promises have not changed. God’s intent in teaching many of the clean and unclean laws was for his people to learn to be holy and separate from sin. God’s intent has always been and will always be for his people to become holy.

Does just believing in the name of Jesus and his sacrifice make you holy? If this was so, Paul would not be instructing the congregation to “cleanse themselves and perfect holiness”. These people were already believers in Jesus and his sacrifice. Wasn’t that enough? Obviously not.

Peter also says, “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy”.

There is no doubt that scripture teaches we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31) and that we are freely forgiven of our sins by God’s grace through the shed blood of Jesus. (Romans 3:24) But we are saved by grace, through faith (Eph 2:8) and are now to be imitators of God. (Eph 5:1) As James said, “you see then that a man is justified by works, and not faith only...faith without works is dead.” (James 2:24-26) Believing is not enough. (James 2:19-23)

We must study God’s words for instruction in holiness and “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1) God will not dwell with sinners. He has given us forgiveness for our sins through His son and the Holy Spirit to direct our ways so that we can have the fruit of holiness. (Romans 6:15-22) In the end He says, “he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”. (Rev. 21:7-8) “He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death. (Rev. 2:11) Paul states it this way, “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13)

The story of the Bible is the same from beginning to end. God offers salvation, eternal life, to those who believe Him, overcome and become holy as He is holy. Will you be saved?