

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

PLAN OF SALVATION



SUMMARY: The scriptural plan of salvation is simple and easy to submit to, leaving why so many choose not to follow it.

The following is a complete listing of all examples of conversion given in the BIBLE during the Christian dispensation, indicating the actual events recorded as occurring during the process:

SCRIP.	WHOM	HEAR	BEL.	REPENT	CONF	BAP.	RESULT
Acts 2:37-41	Day of Pentecost	Yes		Yes		Yes	Remission of sins
Acts 8:4-13	Samaritans	Yes	Yes			Yes	
Acts 8:35-39	Ethiopian Eunuch	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Rejoicing
22:14-16	Tarsus	(1)	Acts 9:18, Yes	Saul, of And wash away			Yes Yes thy sins
Acts 10:34-48	Cornelius	Yes				Yes	
Acts 16:13-15	Lydia	Yes				Yes	She and her household
Acts 16:25-34	Jailor	Yes	Yes			Yes	Rejoiced greatly, having believed, all household
Acts 17:22-34	Athenians @ Mars Hill	Yes	Yes				Says "some men joined him (Paul) and believed"
Acts 18:8	Corinthians Crispus, Leader of Synagogue	Yes	Yes			Yes	
Acts 19:1-6	Ephesians	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
GREAT COMMISSION							
Matthew 28:18-20	All nations (Gr. Comm.)	Yes				Yes	I am with you always
Mark 16:15-16	Every creature	Yes	Yes			Yes	Shall be saved

It is notable that of the five things which are considered to be in the plan of salvation (not a scriptural term), no example includes all five events. Only hearing is stated at all recorded conversions, but we presume all acts actually happened, just weren't recorded. Rather than allowing individual Christians to select which scenario to follow, we consider that the lists are abridged and that all of the events are required to follow the "Biblical example".

The following other special cases of conversion are in the New Testament, but before the establishment of the kingdom (church):

1. **JOHN'S BAPTISM:** A baptism of repentance in anticipation of the coming of the Christ. (Matt 3:5-16, Mark 1:4-5, Luke 3:12, Luke 7:29, John 1:25-33, John 3:25) (There is no example that re-baptism was required after Pentecost, other than Acts 19:1-6 where the baptism probably took place after Pentecost.)
2. **BAPTISM OF JESUS:** Baptized by John to fulfill prophecy, no need for repentance or confession (Matthew 3:13-16, Luke 3:21)
3. **BAPTISM BY THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS:** Only comment was that they were baptizing more than John (John 4:1-2)
4. **THIEF ON THE CROSS:** Special case before the day of Pentecost (establishment of the church) of confession only and salvation personally granted by Jesus during the Jewish dispensation. (without baptism) (Luke 23:42-43)

The following are common points of differences on the subject of the plan of salvation:

1. REQUIREMENT FOR BAPTISM PRIOR TO SALVATION:

Acts 2:38 clearly makes baptism a requirement for salvation, but some feel that if the "work" of baptism is required for salvation, then salvation is of "works" rather than of the "Grace of God". Baptism can reasonably be considered as not "earning" salvation but more like signing a check for a gift of one million dollars. The signing of the check does not earn you the one million dollars, but if you do not sign the check you will not get the money. That is the way the rules are, irrespective of whether you happen to like the particular rule.

2. TYPE OF BAPTISM:

It is universally accepted by scholars that the form of baptism in the first century was by immersion, however sprinkling and/or pouring is practiced by many churches today. The fact that first century baptism meant immersion is confirmed by historical perspective. The oldest known example of sprinkling and/or pouring was that of Novation in A.D. 251, when he lay sick in bed. If it had not been a new practice, it would not have been recorded in history. It then came into practice as "clinical" baptism for the sick. The practice was "approved" by the Catholic Church in A.D. 1311 at the council of Ravenna. The sprinkling of babies was "approved" in A.D. 1751.

Contemporary dictionaries may give immersion, sprinkling, and pouring as definitions of baptism. This is because a contemporary dictionary gives the contemporary meanings of a word rather than the original meaning.

3. **INFANT BAPTISM:**

Baptism of infants eliminates the scriptural steps of hear, believe, repent, and confess before baptism. Earliest known teaching on depravity (total sinfulness of babies was written by Augustine in A.D. 375, with some examples of infant baptism occurring from then until "approval" in A.D. 1751. This act gives a ceremony to the "Christians" similar to the circumcision of the Jewish dispensation.

Children were used as symbols of what we should become like to enter the kingdom of Heaven (i.e. without sin), rather than as depraved beings needing baptism. (Matthew 18:2-4, Mark 10:15)

The statement that Lydia's and the Jailor's household was baptized is taken by some to imply that there were babies in the house to justify infant baptism. No indication that this was true.

4. **HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM:**

Two cases of Holy Spirit baptism: Disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and the gentile Cornelius with his family and friends (Acts 10) which was 8-10 years later. Clearly not a common practice in the first century as Peter has to go back 8-10 years to Pentecost for a prior example in Acts 10:47. See also Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 for administrator.

5. **BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD:** Derived from I Cor. 15:29. More easily understood as "Why are they baptized for the sake of their resurrection from the dead?" (Johnson, Peoples N.T.)

6. **LORDSHIP BAPTISM:** A practice of the Church of Christ, Boston which questions the validity of a baptism in which you do not state that Jesus is the Lord of your life. No scriptural basis.

Inside the front cover of the Gideons International Bible as will be found in most hotel rooms, the first thing listed is "The Way of Salvation". It includes the verses of John 14:6, Acts 16:31, and Romans 10:9 as the verses instructive of the plan of salvation.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (NAS)

Acts 16:31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." (NAS)

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Rom 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus {as} Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; (NAS)

Can you imagine people's perception of the plan of salvation if this is their source?