

Christianity 101
Lesson 2

Salvation and the New Birth

This lesson belongs to: _____

Lesson 2

Salvation and the New Birth

Key Verse: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* John 3:16

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help the disciple form a clear understanding of salvation and of the new birth.

A Very Important Question

If you stood at the gate of heaven when you died and were asked on what basis should you be allowed to enter heaven, and were given only one chance to get it right, what would be your answer?

Salvation

What is salvation? Each religion and cult offers a different meaning and means to be “saved”. Here are just a few:

- **Biblical Christianity:** Salvation is by grace through faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a reward for an individual’s good works. It is a free and unmerited gift of God’s grace to those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and who trust exclusively in His work of redemption on their behalf through His physical death on the Cross followed by His physical resurrection from the dead.
- **Mormonism:** Salvation is by grace *after* you have done all you can do. A person must do their best, deny all ungodliness, turn from all former sins and commit them no more. If a person commits a past sin again, the former sins return. To remain forgiven, a person must never commit the sin again.
- **Jehovah Witnesses:** Salvation involves four things: 1) having a knowledge of the only true God (Jehovah) and Jesus Christ including His purpose for the earth and His role as earth’s new King, 2) obeying God’s commandments, 3) being associated with God’s channel of salvation, his organization, the Watchtower Society, and 4) being loyal to personally advocate Jehovah’s kingdom to others. Only 144,000 will live as spirits in heaven. The rest of the righteous will be raised to live on earth for 1,000 years during which time they must obey God perfectly or else be annihilated.
- **Oneness Pentecostals:** Salvation is possible only when the following three conditions are met: 1) repentance, 2) water baptism by an ordained Oneness minister with the phrase “in the name of Jesus”, and 3) speaking with tongues as evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. Only Oneness adherents will go to heaven.
- **Christian Science:** Eternal salvation is already possessed by everyone. Evil, sin, sickness, and death are not real.
- **Scientology:** There is no such thing as sin so there is no need to repent. Salvation is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. This freedom is achieved through becoming “clear” of all “engrams” (hang ups) through a process called “auditing” whereby Dianetic principles are applied by an “auditor”. The path to “Clear” is called “The Bridge”
- **New Age:** Salvation from sin is not a goal in the New Age because it does not recognize any moral absolutes. All truth systems are tolerated as a means of “harmonization”. The problem is not sin but a failure for mankind to realize that they are divine by nature and must pursue attaining the “Christ principle”. Through their own divine self-awareness they can then experience and create their own reality. Progress toward the Christ principle is achieved by offsetting bad karma with good karma through the use of meditation, self-awareness, and “spirit guides”. Peace and harmony in all areas—man with man, man with nature, and man with God will be realized as mankind become united through this divine knowledge.

- **Judaism:** Salvation in the mind of some Jews is achieved through religious prayers, repentance, and obeying the Torah (Law of Moses). Salvation in the mind of other Jews is achieved through the improvement of society.
- **Islam:** Salvation is a matter of Allah's sovereign decision. Allah requires all who wish to be saved to observe the Five Pillars of Islam: 1) Confessing the Faith (*Shahada*), 2) Prayer (*Salat*), 3) Fasting (*Sawm*), Giving of Alms (*Zakat*), and Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*). Some Muslims hold to a Sixth Pillar called "Jihad" ("Holy Struggle" or "Holy War") whereby a person is guaranteed heaven if they die in a Jihad. In general, salvation involves the weighing on the balance of good deeds versus bad deeds in an individual's life. Allah's sovereign mercy may tip the balance toward heaven.
- **Hare Krishna:** Salvation is obtained through a dedicated process of chanting Krishna's name, complete devotion to Krishna, worshiping images, and obeying the rules of ISKCON through many reincarnated lives to be freed from bad karma.
- **Transcendental Meditation (T.M.):** Salvation involves the evolving of the self to the highest and final state of union with Brahman. This evolution involves ridding oneself of excess evil and doing good. This process may require a series of reincarnations.
- **Hinduism:** Salvation is the release from the cycles of reincarnation into final union with Brahman. This final union with Brahman is achieved over many lifetimes through the practices of yoga and Hindu meditation.
- **Baha'i World Faith:** Salvation comes through placing one's faith in "Baha u llah" as the ultimate manifestation of God, and through knowing and living by his principles and teachings.

What does the Bible say about Salvation?

1. **Jesus came to _____ His people from their _____.**
 - Matthew 1:21 *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*
2. **Jesus came to save sinners from the _____**
 - Romans 1:18 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*
 - Romans 5:9 *"Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:10 *"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."*
3. **There is none _____ before God.**
 - Romans 3:10 *"There is none righteous, no, not one."*
 - Isaiah 64:6 *"But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."*
4. **All have _____ and fall short of God's standard of perfection.**
 - Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*
 - Galatians 3:22 *"But the Scripture has confined all under sin..."*
5. **By the deeds of the law no one will be _____ before God.**
 - Romans 3:20 *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight."*
 - James 2:10 *"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."*
6. **Rather than being justified by good deeds, the consequence of our sin is _____.**
 - Genesis 2:17 *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*
 - Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death."*
 - Death is not only physical but is also spiritual. Physical death separates the living from the dead. Spiritual "death" separates the unrighteous dead from God eternally in a place called the lake of fire.

7. **God did not leave us in our sinful condition without hope. God so _____ us that He gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins.**
- John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - Ephesians 2:4-5 *“But God, who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved).”*
8. **Why did God give the Law of Moses if it could not make man righteous before Him?**
- So that all would be _____ before God.
 - Romans 3:19 *“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”*
 - So that all would know what _____ is.
 - Romans 3:20 *“for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*
 - Romans 7:7-8 *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.”*
 - So that all would recognize their need for _____.
 - Galatians 3:24 *“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.”*
9. **The Gospel (“Good News”) message is that righteousness (“right standing”) before God can be obtained not through the works of the law but by _____ through _____ in Jesus Christ.**
- Romans 3:21-22 *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe.”*
 - Romans 4:4-5 *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”*
 - Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*
 - **Grace** is the undeserved favor of God given to us as a free gift.
 - **Faith** is a heartfelt trust in God accompanied by such full assurance that a person acts upon what God says. Faith without corresponding action is dead faith rather than true faith.⁴⁰
 - It is impossible to be saved by our own works. Some try to “clean up their lives” before getting saved. This is like trying to get cleaned up to take a bath. It is only another attempt to work to earn one’s own salvation rather than to receive salvation as an unmerited gift of God’s grace.
10. **Saving faith includes both _____ in the heart and _____ with the mouth.**
- Romans 10:8-10 *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*
11. **Saving faith will be evidenced by a lifestyle of _____ to God.**
- Matthew 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*

⁴⁰ James 1:17-18, 20, 26

Saving Grace

Sinners are saved by God's grace and not by their own good works. Grace is a free gift of God. It is unearned and undeserved or else it would cease to be grace. Saving grace is free but it is not cheap; it cost God a tremendous price in the death of His Son. Saving grace is God's power extended to save the powerless. Grace not only saves sinners from the *penalty* of sin (justification) but it also saves sinners from the *power* of sin (sanctification). Counterfeit grace does not save. Counterfeit grace redefines grace as a license to sin.⁴¹ It ignores repentance from sin and submission to Christ's Lordship.⁴² Saving grace refers to "the grace of God that brings salvation."⁴³ It is called "the true grace of God".⁴⁴ Saving grace is the work of "the Spirit of grace".⁴⁵ The grace of God that brings salvation "*teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*"⁴⁶ The grace of God is the inner working of God in the life of the believer that imparts both the desire for God's will and the ability to do it.⁴⁷ Rather than provide a license to sin, saving grace empowers the believer to do what truth demands. The evidence of saving grace is a life transformed by the power of grace.

Saving Faith

Saving grace is received through faith.⁴⁸ Faith, however, must be placed in the right object or else that faith will not save. For instance, if we place our faith in the family dog to save us from our sins, our faith is empty because the object of our faith is insufficient to save us. Our faith, though sincere, is completely useless when misplaced in the wrong object. Misplaced faith will not endure. The right object of "saving faith" is the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.⁴⁹ It is more than simple faith in God. Even the demons believe that there is one God but they are not saved.⁵⁰ A person must also place their faith in the Person of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God⁵¹ and in His substitutionary death on the Cross whose blood alone can redeem them.⁵² We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. When a person truly places saving faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the grace of God will transform their life. Although men are not saved *by* good works, they are saved *unto* good works.⁵³ Saving faith will produce corresponding actions consistent with life saved by God's grace. Faith without works proves to be dead faith rather than saving faith.⁵⁴ Salvation is by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone. True faith will yield the fruits of righteousness produced through a life changed and empowered by the grace of God.⁵⁵ Consider the following comparisons:

Antinomian (without law): Faith – Works = Salvation (wrong)

- This view holds that faith saves a person without any evidence of a life transformed by God's grace

Roman Catholic: Faith + Works = Salvation (wrong)

- This view holds that faith opens the door to God's grace so that the believer can through grace establish their own personal righteousness before God so as to be saved.

Protestant: Faith = Salvation + Works (correct)

- This view holds that faith alone in Christ brings salvation apart from good works. Those who are truly saved will bear the fruits of a life transformed by God's grace.

⁴¹ Romans 6:1-2, 15-17; Jude 1:4; Romans 3:8; 6:1-2; Philippians 3:18-19

⁴² Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 1:14-15; Romans 10:9

⁴³ Titus 2:11

⁴⁴ 1 Peter 5:12

⁴⁵ Zechariah 12:10; Hebrews 10:29

⁴⁶ Titus 2:12-13 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ Philippians 2:12-13

⁴⁸ Ephesians 2:8-9

⁴⁹ The gospel is the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 1:17-24; 2:2)

⁵⁰ James 2:19

⁵¹ Matthew 16:16; John 6:69; 9:35-38; Acts 8:37; 9:20; 1 John 4:15. The confession of all true Christians throughout history is not that Jesus was a good man, or a prophet, or something else but that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Jesus" recognizes His humanity. "Christ" recognizes His saving role. "Son of the living God" recognizes His divinity. The phrase "living God" is an Old Testament designation for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as distinguished from the lifeless idols of the nations. (Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4, 16; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Daniel 6:26; Hosea 1:10 / Jeremiah 10:8; 18:15; 1 Corinthians 12:2)

⁵² 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18;

⁵³ Ephesians 2:10

⁵⁴ James 2:26

⁵⁵ Matthew 7:15-23; John 15:1-6; Galatians 5:16-23;

12. Salvation from sin involves the past, present, and future.

- Believers have been saved from the _____ of sin. This is called *justification*.
- Believers are currently being saved from the _____ of sin. This is called *sanctification*.
- Believers will one day be saved from the _____ of sin. This is called *glorification*.

The New Birth

Read John 3:1-21. Nicodemus was one of the prominent religious leaders of his day. Under the cover of night he came to speak with Jesus. As a Jew, Nicodemus looked forward to the day when the Messiah would appear and establish the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus, however, spoke of the kingdom of God in a different way.

13. Salvation involves being delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the _____ (Jesus Christ).

- Colossians 1:12-13 *“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”*

14. The kingdom of God is not of this _____.

- John 18:36 *“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’”*

15. The kingdom of God is not a political kingdom but is a _____ kingdom.

- Luke 17:20-21 *“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’”*

16. Only by being _____ can a person see and enter the kingdom of God.

- John 3:3 *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”*
- John 3:5-6 *“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”*
- Physical birth involves the transition of a human being from one realm in the womb to another realm outside the womb. So it is with the new birth. A person transitions from death to life, from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, and from alienation to a relationship with God.
- Through *physical* birth a newborn becomes a child of his parents. Through *spiritual* birth a person becomes a child of God.

17. The new birth involves more than being saved. It is entering into a new realm called the “kingdom of God.” Jesus compared the new birth to the _____.

- John 3:7-8 *“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*
- No one can see the wind but the evidence of the wind is in the change that it brings in our surroundings. So it is with the new birth. Although it is an unseen work of the Spirit in the heart of man, the evidence is seen in a changed life.

18. The doorway into the kingdom of God is the Person of _____.

- John 10:9 *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”*
- John 14:6 *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.’”*

19. **The mysterious miracle of the new birth is activated by our genuine _____ in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- John 3:14-15 *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*
20. **The new birth is more than an intellectual acknowledgment of the facts of salvation. It is an inner spiritual transformation brought about by the renewing work of the _____.**
- The New Testament word for “believe” involves more than acknowledging a set of facts. It is casting one’s life in total trust and dependence in something or someone. It involves the clinging of our lives to the realities that we profess which proves that we do believe it. Like a drowning man clinging to a life ring until he has been safely brought to shore, so through enduring faith we cling to Christ as our only eternal hope of salvation.
 - The miracle of salvation is the gift of God. It is a miracle of God’s doing. If we were able to perform it, then it would not be a miracle. We would be able to save ourselves! But we cannot save ourselves. Only God, through faith in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, can produce the inward transformation in a life called the new birth.
 - John 6:63 *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”*
 - Titus 3:4-5 *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*
21. **Through the new birth we become a _____ in Christ Jesus.**
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*
 - Romans 6:4 *“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.”*
22. **As newborn believers we are no longer _____ to sin but are free to live for God.**
- Romans 6:6 *“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*
23. **Once we receive the new birth, we should not return to old patterns of sin but make it our aim to _____ up in Christ.**
- 1 Peter 2:1-3 *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”*
 - 2 Peter 3:17-18 *“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall short from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*
24. **As newborn believers we are God’s _____, created in Christ Jesus for _____.**
- Ephesians 2:10 *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*
 - We are not saved by good works, but we are saved *unto* good works. God has not only saved us from our sins but He has also redeemed us so that we can fulfill His purpose for our lives.

Summary:

Being good is not good enough to get to heaven. Rather than being justified by our good works, our sins condemn us to eternal separation from God. The good news is that our sin debt was paid in full through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the free gift of salvation. Through faith we are delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and are “born again” as citizens in the kingdom of God. In the new birth we are “born of the Spirit”—a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Through the new birth we become a new creation in Christ. The door to our past is closed and covered by the blood of Jesus as we enter and live in a spiritual reality that was previously hidden from our eyes. Through salvation and the new birth

we enter the family of God and can enjoy a wonderful and lasting relationship with God as our Heavenly Father and with our new “forever family” in Christ. Once we are born again we are to put the past life of sin behind us as we seek to be more and more like Jesus. In so doing we will be ready and able to fulfill the purpose and work for which He saved us. The right answer to the question at the beginning of this lesson is “I have placed my faith for salvation solely in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross.”

Prayer of Salvation

“Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner. I have sinned against You and deserve the just punishment for my sins. I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. I believe that He died on the Cross in my place for my sins and rose again the third day. I now call upon His name that I might be saved. I receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior. I surrender my life to Him. On the basis of His shed blood, I ask You Father to forgive me of my sins. Make me a new person in Christ through the power of the new birth. From this day forward, I choose to live for You. Sit on the throne of my heart. You are my Lord and Shepherd. I will follow. Use my life as You will to be a witness and a servant in Your kingdom. You are now my Father and I am your child. Father, I ask that You fill me now with the promise of Your Holy Spirit so that I might have the power to live for You. Thank You for hearing my prayer, for saving my soul, and for giving me a brand new life. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen!”

If you prayed this prayer from your heart, then let others know. Tell your pastor and the leaders of your church so that you can follow the Lord’s command to be water baptized. Congratulations on your new life in Christ!

Amazing Grace

By John Newton (1725-1807)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That save a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fear relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come
Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me on

The Lord has promised good to me
His Word my hope secures
He will my Shield and Portion be
As long as life endures

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine

When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun