

Part Five In A Series Of Seven

Changing The Direction Of Our Lives: To What? How?

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

- The Gulf Between God And Us Isn't What God Wants.
- God Offers Us Much More Than The Forgiveness Of Sins.
- Life With And Forgiveness From God Are Found Only In Jesus Christ.
- In The New Testament People Entered Christ When They Trustingly Submitted To Baptism In His Name.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

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GREAT BARR
CHURCH OF CHRIST



GOD, LIFE AND PEOPLE

Part five in a Series of Seven

5. TURNING TO GOD



Changing The Direction Of Our Lives: To What? How?

'caring for PEOPLE for PEOPLE matter to God' [Romans 5:8](#)

WE TURN TO A PERSONAL GOD

I. THE GULF BETWEEN GOD AND US ISN'T GOD'S IDEA

1. God created us out of a heart of love (Psalm 136:5-9). God created no one for the purpose of torturing him, here or here after. The awful mess the world is in is Man's work, not God's!

2. And when we rejected his will for us and betrayed the trust he placed in us, God didn't wash his hands of us. He pursued us throughout the ages, teaching us, pleading with us, working with us in people like Noah, Abraham, and the nation of Israel. Finally God came to planet earth and showed himself in the One we know as Jesus of Nazareth. The life he lived and the death he died, for all of us, tells us once and for all time how God feels about us.

II. WHAT DO WE TURN TO WHEN WE TURN TO GOD?

3. First and foremost, we turn to a personal God! We don't turn to a force or a power. We turn to a Person! Someone who fulfils our need for friendship and comradeship. 'Mother Nature' can't fill our emptiness and a force or a power leaves us lonely and longing. In our better moments we look for more than a soft life and things going our way, we look for a Friend and a Confidant. We find these and more in a personal God, the Father of Jesus Christ (see John 17:3 and Genesis 2:18).

ONLY ONE NAME UNDER HEAVEN CAN SAVE!

12. It's tempting in our day and age to dismiss baptism as of little importance or as something which 'should' be done (but if it isn't, it doesn't matter much). Whatever else is true, the New Testament doesn't speak of it in that way. What you need to ask yourself is this:

When the New Testament speaks of baptism what does it say about baptism? Does the New Testament link it with sins being washed away? Does the New Testament associate it with forgiveness of sins? Does the New Testament say we're baptised 'into Christ and put on Christ'?

In the New Testament baptism was the way sinners placed their trust in the crucified and risen Lord and in doing that they received free and full forgiveness.

How should we respond to all this?

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

10. Why, in the New Testament, did God link forgiveness with baptism? Because baptism was the sinner's confession of faith in Jesus Christ! What Paul preached as of 'first importance' (1 Corinthians 15:3) was the saving work of God in Christ (the death, burial and resurrection).

When people who knew themselves to be lost in sin wanted to turn to God on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, they were called to confess their personal faith in the crucified and risen Lord. This was done by being buried with him and being raised with him (Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 with Romans 10:9-10).

That's how people turned to God in the New Testament; that's what people in the New Testament were commanded to do.

How should we respond?

11. And it was when they were baptised that they took the name of Jesus Christ on them as you can see from Acts 2:38 / 19:5; 22:16 and Matthew 28:19. Only one name under heaven can save (Acts 4:12) and people embraced that name (the person) by faith in submitting to baptism in his name.

WE TURN TO FORGIVENESS AND LIFE

4. We turn to Forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift. It's a gift that persons give to each other. A personal God gives the gift of forgiveness to personal sinners. Forgiveness is an ongoing thing (1 John 1:9) and it depends on our living in relationship with Christ because there, and only there, can forgiveness be found—in Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

5. We turn to life. Jesus didn't come just to convict us of our trespasses, he came to convict us of our possibilities! He urges us to look less at what we're running from and more at what we're running to! The stress is not on what we have been and are but what we can and will be with his help. Christ stresses not what we give up but what we gain.

Abraham gives up his family (Genesis 12:1) and becomes father to multiplied millions. Moses gives up the riches of Egypt (Hebrews 11:26) and becomes one of the world's greatest liberators. Paul gives up his prized possessions (Philippians 3: 4-7) and becomes Christ's glorious ambassador. God doesn't cheat us— he gives us life, fullness of life (John 10:10).

All of the experiences of life become useful and touched with glory (even the suffering and defeats) because God is with Man in them (Isaiah 43: 1-3 / Matthew 1:23).

THEY CAME RECOGNISING THEIR SINFULNESS

When Man turns to God he turns to hope in the face of hardship, peace in the face of turmoil, joy in the face of suffering and a deep sense of mission in the face of a sad world where millions fritter their precious lives away.

III. HOW DID PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TURN TO GOD?

1. They came recognising their sinfulness!
2. They recognised they couldn't save themselves!
3. In trusting repentance they were baptised into Christ!
6. See how the following scriptures make this clear:

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied: 'Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ...' Those who accepted his message were baptised and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:37, 38 & 41).

IN TRUSTING REPENTANCE THEY WERE BAPTISED

7. The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked,

'Men, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptised' (Acts 16:29-33).

8. 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you Lord?' I asked. 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting' ... 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. 'And now, what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name' (Acts 22:7, 8, 10 & 16).

9. It would be helpful if you read carefully the following texts:

John 3:16 / Galatians 3:26-27 / Acts 10:43 / Matthew 28:19 / Acts 17:30-31 / Romans 6:3-7 / Romans 10:9-10 / Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 2:8-9.