

SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

The life Jesus lived was different to that of any other man or woman. He always obeyed the commandments of God. Unlike us he was sinless.

God raised him from the dead and he will never die again. God has given him eternal life.

As soon as Jesus was raised from the dead, he began to teach his disciples about his death and resurrection. He showed how all of the Old Testament was written about him.

Luke 24:44-46

'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures. He told them "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus went up into heaven. The disciples preached the Gospel to people as Jesus had commanded them. They began to do this in Jerusalem. They started on a special day. It was a holiday and many people had come into the city. Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, told them about the crucifixion of Jesus. He told them that God had raised him from the dead and had made him their king. The people who heard him were upset by this message. They asked Peter what they should do.

Acts 2:37-39

'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 for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.'

Peter told them to repent. They must understand that they had sinned against God. They must feel this in their hearts. The people were sorry that they had not listened to the preaching of Jesus. They realised that they had disobeyed God's commandments in their lives. They wanted to put their lives right with God. This is what repentance means.

Repentance is the first step for anyone who wants to be saved. We have to feel a real need of God in our lives. This must come from the heart. When we feel like this, we should pray to God and ask him 'What shall I do?'

King David wrote Psalm 32 when he had sinned. At first he pretended that he had not disobeyed God. He kept quiet and did not pray about it. This made him ill. Then he repented of his sin and confessed it to God. He asked God to forgive him.

Psalm 32:3-6

'Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" -- and you forgave the guilt of my sin

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found.'

Peter also told the people to be baptised. This is a very important Bible teaching. We will look at what it means in the next lesson.

Peter told the men and women who repented and were baptised that God would forgive their sins. He would forgive all the wrong things they had done, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who repented and were baptised were also promised a gift. They did not receive it then. It will be given to them, and all the faithful disciples of Jesus, when Jesus returns.

The Bible tells us about this gift.

Romans 6:23

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

We cannot earn salvation by anything we do in our lives. The only wages we deserve in God's sight are those we earn as sinners. That is death. But God wants to give us eternal life. This will be his great gift to us. He has promised life through Jesus, his son, to those who obey him.

Jesus will return to earth to set up God's kingdom. Then all the people who have repented and accepted him as their saviour will receive the promised gift of eternal life. They will live in the kingdom of God for ever.

This is a promise from God. It is sure and certain. It is the same promise God made in the Old Testament to people such as Abraham and David. They were told they would be brought back to life to live for ever in God's kingdom.

When Peter stood up to speak in Jerusalem, he said that this promise was now given to the Jews in Jerusalem, to their children, and to all who are afar off. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, God's promises were given to all people who believed and obeyed, not just to the Jews. So now God's promise of eternal life in his kingdom can apply to us also.

Why did Peter say these things? The Bible tells us that God is kind and forgiving. He does not want people to perish. He provided a way to overcome sin and death. He had a son, Jesus who was the only man who lived a perfect life. He always did what God asked him, even though this was very difficult.

It was God's will that Jesus should die for our sins. God accepted his death because he was sinless. He was a perfect sacrifice for our sins. God said that he will accept us and forgive us, for all that we have done wrong, through the sacrifice of Jesus. If we accept Jesus as our saviour, it will be as if he took all our sins away when he died. Then God will see us as people without sin.

In Acts chapter 2, Peter also says that this promise of salvation is for those whom the Lord God will call. We must choose to follow Jesus as his disciples. We must decide for ourselves. God calls us to believe the Gospel, to repent, and to be baptised. But he will not force us to do it. Many of the Jews who listened to Peter obeyed this call from God. Their lives were changed.

Acts 2:46-47

'Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.'

That is what happens to those who choose to follow Jesus. They feel happiness and gladness that God has forgiven their sins. They understand that they now belong to God as his children. They believe that when Jesus returns to set up God's kingdom, they will be given eternal life and will share the kingdom with him.

Questions

- 1 Why is Jesus different to any other man who lived?
- 2 What did Jesus do after his resurrection?
- 3 What does repent mean?
- 4 What promise does God make to you if you repent?
- 5 Who died to take our sins away?
- 6 When will faithful disciples receive the gift of God?