



As It Was Taught in the Beginning

To understand what it means to become a true Christian, to accept Christ personally, we'll examine the very first sermon ever uttered on the subject found in the book of Acts at an event called "Pentecost" where the church first began.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

—Acts 2:36-37

The critical first step in the process is believing and acknowledging that God has made Jesus both your Lord (King) and Christ (Savior).

Peter arrived at this point in his conversion experience by the Sea of Galilee when after following Jesus' ministry for awhile, it became real to Peter personally when he finally recognized that Jesus was no mere man or prophet or teacher.

"But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'"

—Luke 5:8

Just as this acknowledgment pierced the hearts of those hearing Peter's words and so changed their life, so you must believe that Jesus must become your personal King and Savior above all else. It's the dual recognition of Christ's authority over your life and that He is the only One who can provide salvation through the forgiveness of your sinful life.

Repentance: "Believing" Is Not Enough

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’”

—Acts 2:38-40

When you come to the place of confessing Jesus as Lord and Christ, the initial action on your part is to “repent”. It’s not enough just to acknowledge Jesus but to prove you truly believe He is your King and Savior by changing your behavior. True repentance is a change of mind, purpose, and life consisting of four things:

- A true sense of one’s own guilt and sinfulness
- An apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ
- An actual hatred of sin and turning from it to God
- A persistent pursuit after a holy life, walking with God in the way of His Word

Jesus as Savior and King

The first two points relate to Jesus as Savior: We acknowledge our sin and sinful life and come to Christ knowing that it is only through Him and His mercy that He cleanses us and provides salvation from the ultimate results of sin. It’s not something we can do alone but only through Him.

The second two points relate to Jesus as King in that we can no longer bear to repeat the sins of our former life and therefore begin from this day forward to walk obediently according to His commandments, His Word.

- **A true penitent is conscious of guilt.** *“Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.”* — Psalm 51:4
- **A true penitent strives to live a changed life, no longer allowing sin to take root.** *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”* — Psalm 51:5

- **A true penitent is aware of his helplessness to change on his own and the need for the Savior.** *“But You, O God, the LORD, deal kindly with me for Your name’s sake; Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me; For I am afflicted and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.”* — Psalm 109:21-22

In the World but No Longer OF the World

These things must all happen before the act of baptism, which is really a public expression and testimony that all the above have become true in your life, that you’ve not just acknowledged Jesus as King and Savior but have submitted to changing your heart and behavior to reject the old life and conform to the new.

This is essentially the meaning of Peter’s final statement in Acts 2:40, “...*Be saved from this perverse generation!*” He’s saying that you must set yourself apart from this world and its ways by changing not just your beliefs but your behavior, becoming obedient to Christ in your heart, mind, and soul and thus different from the rest.

The Holy Spirit Becomes Your Guide

The final result will be God giving you the gift of the Holy Spirit Who will guide you in this transformation and open your heart, mind, eyes, and ears to God’s actions in your life and to His voice through His Word. The Bible will no longer be some sort of ancient information book but will become the voice of God to you personally.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

—Hebrews 4:12-13

Having committed to a new life, obedient to God’s commandments, and now possessing the Holy Spirit, you will begin to hear God speaking to you personally through His Word.