

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

(How to become a Christian)



I. Introduction

By now you have probably examined the evidence that Jesus lived upon the earth, died upon a cross, rose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and in so doing proclaimed victory over sin and victory over death for all who will follow him. You have discovered that the word of God is God's letter to us, teaching us how to have a relationship with Him through his Son, Jesus. You have also explored the meaning of biblical faith, that it is more than an intellectual acceptance of Jesus. It is a life of trusting in God's power and promises.

This study is meant to explore what the Bible teaches about sin and God's great gift of delivery from sin through his Son and our trusting in God's promises. Remember to always be like the Bereans, checking out the Scriptures daily to see if all of this is true, Acts 17:11.

Two questions before we begin this study will help us compare what we have been taught about becoming a Christian and what the Bible teaches. It is important to consider these questions before the study because if what we have always heard is different than what the word of God teaches this will help demonstrate that difference. These questions are not to be a source of argument, but instead an opportunity to make sure Satan does not confuse us with false teaching. If our answers don't match God's plan then we can encourage one another to take appropriate action.

- a. When did I become a Christian?
- b. How was I saved? (At what point were my sins forgiven?)



II. Darkness or Light

I Peter 2:9-10 (Remember this is written to Christians)

Peter uses light and darkness to contrast Christians and those who have not become Christians. What are the characteristics of those in the light? Those in darkness?

Descriptions:	Darkness	Light
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Conclusions:	Saved or Lost?	Saved or Lost?
	Not a Christian	Christian

Peter notes that we are either in light or in darkness. Why would many people want there to be a type of "twilight zone/gray area?"

The questions we want to ask and answer in this study are: Am I in the light or darkness? And what, if anything, do I need to do about that?

III. The Problem with Sin / Darkness

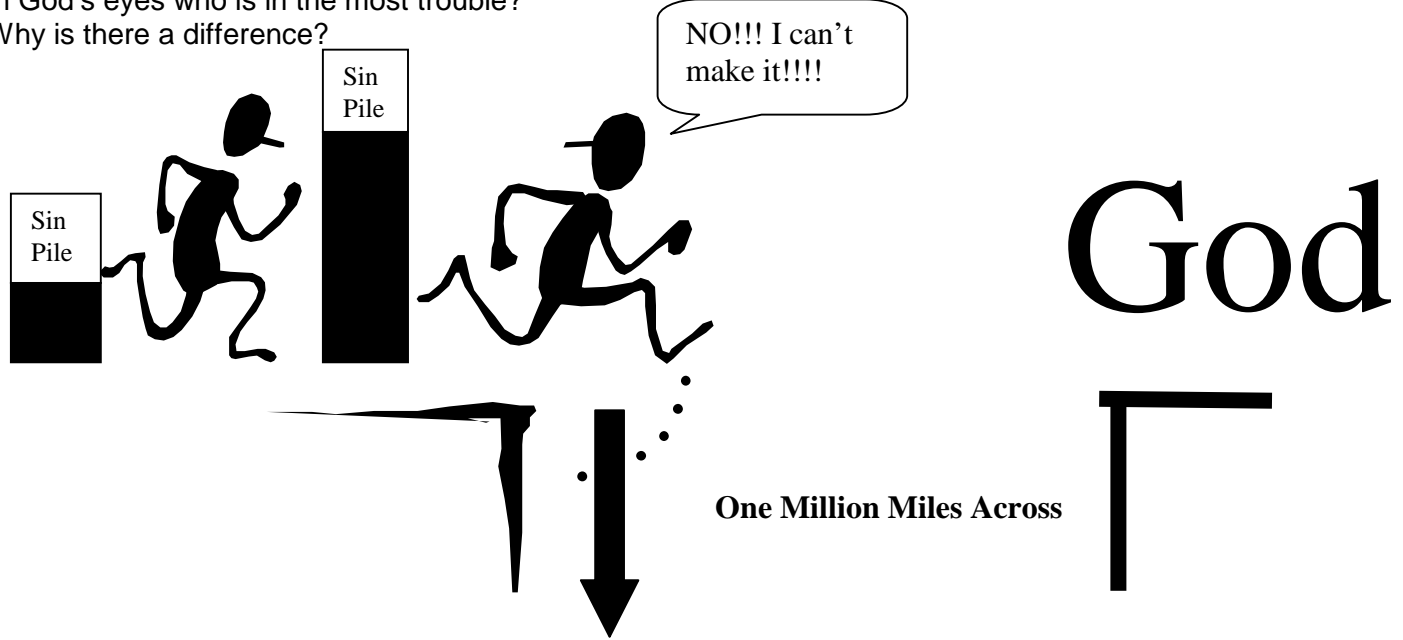
Romans 3:23-24

Who has sinned?

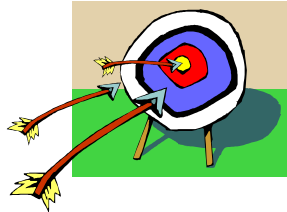
In our eyes, who below is in the most trouble?

In God's eyes who is in the most trouble?

Why is there a difference?



Observations: Sin is literally 'missing the mark.' It is an archery term to miss the bull's eye. Everyone has sinned, therefore all will fall short of God when we try to be right with God by our own power and goodness. In our eyes there are different degrees of sin; in God's eyes all sin is a problem causing us to fall short of Him.



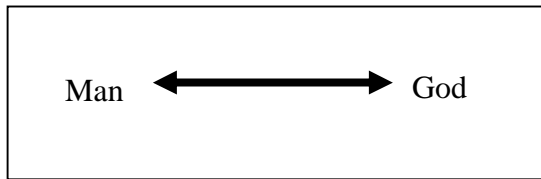
Isaiah 59:1- 2

What separates us from God?

What are sins and iniquities?

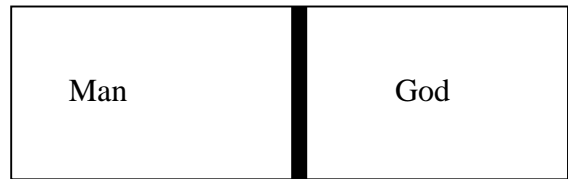
Observations: The words, sins and iniquities, are synonyms describing what separate us from God. Both contain the idea of breaking God's law. Iniquity is an offense against God's law whether intentional or not. Sin is missing the mark or the road God expects of our lives. Sin and iniquity are the problems in man's relationship with God and they must be removed for us to be in fellowship with God.

NO SIN



FELLOWSHIP

SIN



SEPARATES

Romans 6:23

What does our sin earn for us?

What is the wage earned if someone commits only one sin in his or her life?

What kind of death is this?



Date: _____

Pay to the Order of: _____

Wage of Sin: ETERNAL DEATH Signed: God, Romans 6:23

Observations: The wages of sin is death, eternal death, because it is contrasted with eternal life in verse 23. For God to be faithful He must keep his word, including the death penalty of sin. Therefore, we can be confident that God will pay us what we have earned unless we accept His gift of life. Our only hope is God's gift of life.

IV. Definition of Sin

I John 3:4

What is God's law?

What does it mean to break the law?

Observation: Sin is the breaking of God's word/Scripture.

Galatians 5:19- 21

Why do you think the Bible says that sin is obvious?

What does it mean to be _____? (Fill in the blank with one of the words from the list.)

Observations: This letter is written to Christians warning and reminding them of the consequences of a lifestyle of sin. Habitual sin indicates we are not saved. It is important to know what sin is in a specific manner so we can overcome sin and live for God. To know what these words mean may require a trip to the dictionary.

James 4:17

What are some things that come to mind when we talk about not doing the good we should?

Why do you think this is sin?

Observations: Things we choose to not do when we should are also called sin. "Sins of omission" would include things like not being active with the church, not reading our Bibles, not helping those in need, not caring for widows and orphans, etc. This is a call to live for God, but also a realization that without the grace of God we have no hope.

V. Light: Leaving Darkness and Coming to Christ – Good News after Jesus' Death

Acts 2:22-24

What did God use to validate Jesus' ministry?

Whose purpose was it for Jesus to die? Why?

Why were these people guilty of Jesus' death even if some of them were not present at the crucifixion? How does that apply to us?

What did God do to demonstrate the victory in Jesus?

What hope does the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus give you?



Observations: Verse 22 reveals Jesus is from God and his miracles are proof of that. Verse 23 tells us that it was God's purpose for Jesus to die. Verse 24 proclaims that Jesus was raised physically from the dead and defeated death. All people are ultimately responsible for the crucifixion of Christ because sin required the sacrifice of God himself to fulfill the righteousness of God, pay the penalty of sin, and restore mankind into fellowship with God. Remember Romans 3:23 states that all people have sinned. The uniqueness of Christ's death is not the fact he was crucified, but that God died for our sins.

Acts 2:36-37

What was the people's response to the message?
Why do you think they were cut to the heart?
What does it mean to be cut to the heart?

Observations: These people were convicted of their rejection of Jesus and their sin. They wanted to know "what shall we do?" or in other words, "Is there any hope for us?" The correct response to God is, "What must I do?"



Acts 2:38-39

What does it mean to repent?
What does it mean to be baptized?
What does "in the name of Jesus Christ" mean?
What does God through Peter promise will happen when, based on the belief of Jesus as Lord and Christ, a person repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ?
According to this passage of Scripture at what point are a person's sins forgiven? What does that tell us about someone going from darkness to light?
What role will the Holy Spirit play in the life of a new Christian?

Observations: Repentance is literally to "change the mind" which results in a change of life. Baptize means to "immerse". The promise associated with baptism is (1) forgiveness of sins and (2) receiving the gift of Holy Spirit. The power of salvation is in Jesus, his death, burial and resurrection. The point in time an individual is saved is the point in time of their baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. God promises in Scripture that baptism is when sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit is given.

Acts 2:40-41

What message did the 3,000 accept?
How do you know that these people accepted the message of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus?

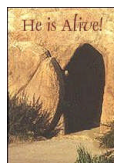
Observation: The message they accepted was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The proof that they accepted the message of Christ was their baptism/immersion.

VI. Application:

How does what we have just studied in the Bible on how to become a Christian match with your previous answer on how you became a Christian?

Based on what the Scriptures teach, are your sins forgiven or not? Why?

What will you do now that you know these truths?



VII. Additional Scriptures Relating to Baptism

Jesus' Teaching

Matthew 28:18-20

Once people know about Jesus and are ready to follow him they are to be baptized and then taught to obey everything the Lord has commanded. (Note Mark 16:16 also.)

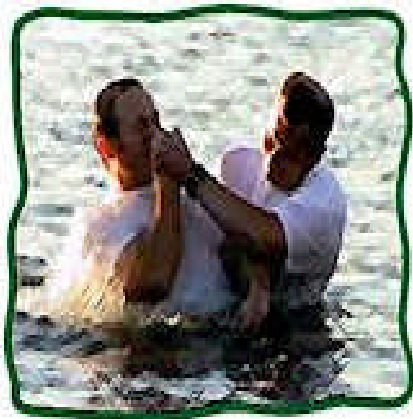
John 3:1-7

A person must be born again of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Teachings of the Apostles

Romans 6:1 - 4

Baptism is the sharing or participating in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism is more than just a symbol. It is the point in time we die to our old life and are raised to live a new life in Christ.



I Corinthians 12:12-13

Baptism is the point that we become part of the body of Christ, the church.

Galatians 3:26-27

Baptism is the point, which by faith in Christ Jesus, we are clothed with Christ and become sons of God.

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is only one Biblical baptism by this time in the history of the church. I Peter 3:21, written about the same time as Ephesians, demonstrates this baptism is in water for salvation. Paul's teaching in the city of Ephesus in Acts 19 also demonstrates that it is baptism in the name of Jesus, Acts 2:38; 22:16.

Colossians 2:11-12

Baptism is the point in time when, by faith, we are buried with Christ and raised with Him. It is the time when our sinful nature is cut away. We are forgiven.

Titus 3:4-5

The washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit are references to baptism. Acts 2:38 proclaims that at our baptism (immersion in water) in the name of Jesus our sins are forgiven, God saves us, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I Peter 3:21

The water of Noah represents the water of our baptism. Water separated, saved Noah from a sinful world and our baptism in water saves us. The power of salvation rests in Jesus but the point in time of salvation is at our baptism.

The New Testament Plan of Salvation.

Hear - Romans 10:14 - 17

Believe - John 8: 24; Acts 16:31

Repent - Acts 17:30, 31; Acts 2:38

Confess - Romans 10:9

Baptized - Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21

Follow Jesus – Matthew 28:18-20 (learn to obey all that Jesus has instructed)

Major examples of conversion in the book of Acts

Acts 2:36 - 47 - First Christians on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 8:4 - 13 - Conversion of the Samaritans.

Acts 8:26 - 39 - Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Note that baptism is part of the gospel.

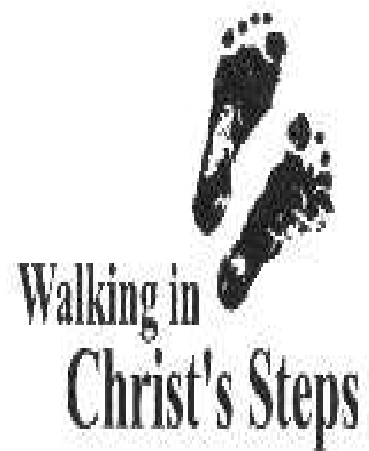
Acts 16:23 - 34 - The Philippian Jailer.

Acts 18:5 - 8 - Conversion of the Corinthians.

Acts 19: 1 - 7 - Rebaptism of 12 men in the name of the Lord Jesus at Ephesus.

Acts 9:1 - 18 - Conversion of Saul, later known as the apostle Paul

Acts 22:3 - 16 - Paul recounts his conversion.



VIII. Refuting False Doctrines

1. "Pray Jesus (will come) into your heart"

This phrase is never mentioned in the Bible. They may use Rev. 3:20 about Jesus knocking at the door; however, you must examine any Scripture in its context. This Scripture does not tell a person how to become a Christian and be saved. Rather, it tells a Christian how to come back to God after becoming lukewarm. It is addressed to Christians who have already responded to Christ in faith, repentance, confession and baptism. This passage is addressed to the Church (see Rev. 3:14) and not to outsiders.

2. "Accept Jesus into your heart"

This is usually based on Rom. 10:9. The key is to really see what the passages are saying and the context in which they are found. Romans 10 is addressed to Christians (see verse 1) in contrast to the unbelieving Jews (Rom. 10:1 - 4). Paul is not telling his readers (who are already Christians) what to do to be saved, but he is discussing the problem of the Israelites who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. If anyone wants to know what role baptism played in the lives of these Christians at Rome please read Rom. 6:1 - 6.

3. "Baptism doesn't save you"

By itself, no! Agreed! It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves us (Matt. 26:28). We are not discussing what saves a person but when a person is saved. We are discussing what a person must do in order to be born again (John 3:5). The clear answer is found in Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3, 4. Jesus shed His blood in his death. We are baptized with him into His death. That is when we contact the blood of Jesus Christ. That is why I Peter 3:21 says that baptism does save you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

4. "Original Sin"

Ezekiel 18:20 says that each person is responsible for his own actions and not those of either his father or his own children. Each person will be judged for what they have personally done. This rules out any idea of original sin. If original sin is true then Jesus was also a sinner because He was also born into the world (Gal. 4:4). The Roman Catholic Church invented the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception of Mary" (that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived and born without sin) in order to cover up for the false doctrine of original sin.

5. "Infant Baptism"

There is no reason for infant baptism since babies do not inherit sin from their parents (Ezekiel 18:20); also, a baby cannot have faith, therefore babies are not suitable candidates for baptism (see Col. 2:12; Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:26, 27).

6. "Baptism is a work"

The Bible does not say baptism is a work; it is man that teaches such; not Scripture. The Bible does say that belief (faith) is a work (John 6:28, 29), but faith does not nullify the grace of God. (See Eph. 2:8, 9). Baptism is not a work, but that which puts us in contact with the blood of Christ so we can be saved (Romans 6:3, 4)

7. "Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace"

False! Men teach this; the Bible never makes such a statement. Rather, Rom. 6:1-4 states that baptism is an actual participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

8. "Baptism isn't important"

After all, look at what Paul said about it in I Cor. 1:10 - 17! Paul does not diminish the importance of baptism at all. (Paul himself was baptized to wash away his sins; Acts 22:16). In the context, Paul makes the point because he did not want to contribute to the division in the church at Corinth. It is in the context of Paul's strong appeal against the sin of following people, also known as denominationalism, (see also John 17:20 - 23) that he makes this statement on baptism.

9. "Baptism for the remission of sins is Holy Spirit baptism"

Not so! Acts 2:38 mentions baptism in the name of Jesus is for the remission of sins and Peter makes it perfectly clear that baptism in the name of Jesus is water baptism (Acts 10:47, 48).

10. "Baptism in Acts 2:38 is 'because of' the remission of sins"

A person is to be baptized because he is already saved; has the remission of sins. False! The same Greek phrase is found in Matt. 26:28. If baptism is because your sins have already been forgiven, then Jesus shed his blood because our sins were already forgiven. Such a thought is blasphemous and repulsive to those who know the Bible. Baptism is for the purpose of obtaining the remission of sins.

11. "The thief on the cross wasn't baptized and he was saved"

One can only speculate as to whether or not the thief on the cross was baptized or not. Both John the Baptist and Jesus baptized many sinners. The thief on the cross may have been baptized; however, such is irrelevant to the case. The statement to the thief on the cross was made before the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ (note Rom. 6:3 - 4). Jesus' new Covenant (Matt. 26:28) did not come into force until His death (Heb. 9:15 - 17). Before Jesus' death He had the power to forgive sins (see Matt. 9:2). Following His resurrection Jesus gave specific instructions on how we are to be saved (Matt. 28:18 -20; Mark 16:15,16). These instructions were carried out by the apostles and others (see Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21).