

Lifting Up Jesus

#7

CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE

When we realize our sin problem and our helplessness to rise above our natures on our own, there is only one thing left to do. To give up and let God take control! When God brings us up to this point, we consider the miracle of conversion. However, what about repentance? Don't we have to repent first to come to God? Doesn't repentance come before conversion? In this lesson, we will explore what the Bible teaches about conversion and repentance.

1. How important is the experience of conversion? John 3:3

2. Where does the power for the new birth come from? John 1:12, 13

3. Who is the active agent in the new birth? John 3:5; Titus 3:5

Note: Conversion is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is marked by a change of attitude toward God. Instead of running away from God, the one who is being converted turns toward God.

4. Does mankind naturally understand spiritual things? 1 Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7

5. So, what must take place in order for us to understand? Eph. 4:23, 24

Note: Conversion creates a new and deeper capacity for knowing God. The Holy Spirit renews your mind and thereby creates new understandings and interests that were not there before. You begin to experience a new desire to know God.

6. Does the new heart lead to a changed life? Ezekiel 36:26, 27

Note: Conversion is called the new birth. It is the beginning of spiritual life. Just as you cannot choose your own birthday in the physical life, you cannot choose your own spiritual birthday. You cannot convert yourself. Or others for that matter. That is completely up to God. You can share Christ with others but it is up to the Holy Spirit to change the attitude toward God.

7. What promise does God make about the work He starts in us? Phil 1:6

8. Is repentance necessary for salvation? Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9

9. What types of people feel the need for repentance? Mark 2:17

10. Are there a genuine and a false sorrow for sin? 2 Corinthians 7–10

Note: Genuine sorrow for sin includes a turning away from the sin. The false sorrow for sin is more of a sorrow for the consequences of the sin. The thief is not sorry he stole but only sorry that he was caught and is now in jail.

11. So where does genuine repentance come from? Acts 5:31

Note: “Just here is a point on which many may err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent, and that repentance prepares for the forgiveness of their sins.... The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ.... We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.” S C p. 26.

How is repentance accomplished? Do we come to Christ in order to repent, or repent in order to come to Christ? We cannot repent of anything UNTIL we come to Christ. Repentance is something we receive. It is a gift from God. We come to Jesus and He grants us repentance and then forgives our sins. We do not cleanse ourselves in order to come to Christ. Instead, we come to Christ and then HE does the job of cleansing us.

12. How does God lead us to repentance? Romans 2:4

13. After Peter denied Jesus and then remembered His goodness, what did He do? Matt. 26:74, 75

Conclusion: We cannot turn away from sin in our own strength but we can seek the Lord to do those things for us. God delights to help those who cannot help themselves. We do not turn away from sins in order to repent. We come to Jesus in order to repent. Our part is only always to come to Him.¹

¹ Lewis, K. A. (2010). *Lifting up Jesus: Bible Study Lessons*. Walla Walla, WA: Karen Ann Lewis.