

Have You Asked Jesus to Come into Your Heart?

by Bryan Gibson

Today, when the question is asked, “What must I do to be saved?” one popular reply is, “Ask Jesus to come into your heart.” It could be that someone reading this article was told these very words, or at least something very similar.

Before we deal specifically with that teaching, we want to make one thing perfectly clear. One who desires to have Jesus in his heart should be commended—that desire is right and good. Look at the promise Jesus made in John 14:23: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” At least three different passages speak of Christ being “in you” (Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:27). Ephesians 3:17 is even more specific: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). So on this matter there can be no dispute. Jesus wants to dwell in our hearts, and we should want Him to be there.

But, as right as this desire may be, “Ask Jesus to come into your heart” is NOT the correct answer to the question, “what must I do to be saved?” We know this because this same question was asked a couple of times in the New Testament, and that is NOT what they were told to do. Let’s look closer to see exactly what they were told to do.

In Acts 16:30 a man asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Their reply? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). But that’s not all they said—look at the next verse. “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:32). The details of this sermon are not provided, but the response to it is recorded: “And immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16:33). We can safely infer that they were told to be baptized, because that’s what they did immediately following the sermon.

The question is also asked in Acts 2:37, this time by a group of people: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They had actually been told to do something in the previous verse: “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” This was essentially the same thing Paul and Silas said in Acts 16:31—“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” But again, that’s not all they were told to do. Look at verse 38: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The response was overwhelming—“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

So to the question—what must I do to be saved—what is the correct answer, the Biblical answer? Let’s put together what we learned from the passages above. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31; Acts 2:36). Repent of your sins (Acts 2:38). Confess your faith in Jesus (not mentioned specifically in the passages above, but this is clearly what people did to express their faith before being baptized—see Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:37). Be baptized in the

name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 16:33). If you truly want Jesus to dwell in your heart, then you will obey these commandments.