

What you must do to become a New Testament Christian

There is a great deal of confusion in the world today. In spiritual matters many men have relied upon the words of other men. But God has given us a book to guide us in all things. The Bible contains everything we need. It tells us the story of how other people in other times obeyed God.

The Bible deals with three distinct periods of time:

The first period extends from the account of the creation of the world and the first inhabitants, Adam and Eve--to the giving of the Law of Moses. During this time God spoke directly to His chosen leaders, the fathers of various families.

The second period began with the giving of the Ten Commandments to the people and ended when Jesus Christ died on the cross. Because God chose to make His will and wishes known to His people through Moses, this period is often referred to as the Mosaic age.

The third period is the Christian age. This age did not begin with the birth of Jesus Christ, since He lived under the Mosaic age. But it began with the death of Christ and was confirmed by His resurrection from death and His ascension into heaven.

In the first age, God spoke through the heads of families, His chosen leaders. In the second age God spoke through Moses. But to save all men from sin, God sent His own Son to the earth (Hebrews 1:1,2). Jesus was born and grew up on the earth. His teachings are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John for the world to read and obey.

Anyone who has belongings or property that he instructs to be divided among relatives and friends at his death makes a will. This is what Jesus did. His "belongings" were His teachings. When Jesus died, His will put them into effect (Heb. 9:15-17). This was the beginning of the Christian age. This is the last period of the world. When it is completed, the earth will be destroyed by fire and Jesus will return to take the faithful Christians both dead and alive, to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). He will punish everyone who does not obey Him (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

The Christian age is our age! We should study the whole Bible--both the Old Testament and the New Testament. But our priority should be the New Testament because this tells us how to become a Christian. If you have a copy of the New Testament, you can follow His instructions and obey God. It does not matter where you live or whether you have ever talked to a Christian. You can learn what to do to become a New Testament Christian by reading the New Testament.

You Must Believe In Jesus

Many people in the world today have an admiration for Jesus Christ and His teachings. But many of these people also follow after religious leaders who did not even claim to offer salvation to man. None were able to heal and raise the dead, as Jesus did. Yet Jesus does even more, He claims to be the Son of God, the only authority of God on earth (Matthew 28:18). Belief in Him must be either total or not at all. He said, "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father (God) but by me," (John 14:6). So, when a person believes in Jesus, he places total trust in His teachings and pledges obedience to them as soon as they are learned.

You Must Repent of Your Sins

Jesus taught that repentance was necessary for all people (Luke 13:3). To repent is to pledge to God that you will change your sinful life. You are declaring to your fellow man that you have sinned and that you intend to live a new life. But to say that you have sinned is not enough. One who would follow Jesus must make major moral changes in his life. A person who has been immoral in his life, must change. It will soon be clear to all those who know him, that he is now different (Matthew 3:8).

You Must Confess the Name of Christ

When a person becomes a Christian, his whole life must show total dedication to Jesus Christ. A believer wants to talk about Christ. Often, people who believe in Jesus and have admitted their sins, will be asked to confess publicly the name of Christ (Romans 10:9,10). Then, with this accomplished, a person is ready to be immersed (baptized) into Christ.

You Must Be Immersed (Baptized)

In many examples of person becoming Christians, the New Testament plainly states that they were immersed (baptized). The New Testament was written in the Greek language and the word baptizo is the Greek word meaning "immerse." Most Bibles written in English and other languages do not translate this word. It has always meant to fully submerge a person or to bury in water (Romans 6:3-4). When the Ethiopian officer was immersed (baptized), both he and Philip went down into the water, then they came up out of it (Acts 8:38-39). When Paul the Apostle was immersed (baptized), he was told to be immersed (baptized) and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). This proves that immersion (baptism) is the action by which Jesus takes away sins. Peter declared, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins . . ." (Acts 2:38). It is at immersion (baptism) that a person is saved. It is at immersion (baptism) that a person enters Christ (Romans 6:3-4). It is at immersion (baptism) that one is added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).

You Must Be Immersed (Baptized) At Once

When a person becomes convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, he must repent of his sins, confess the name of Jesus, and be immersed (baptized) immediately. People have only a short time to live upon the earth and they should not delay (James 4:17). Paul was asked, "Why do you wait (or delay), arise and be immersed (baptized)" (Acts 22:16; Acts 16).

You should seek out a Christian man or a close friend who can immerse (baptize) you into Christ immediately. You will want to make sure that, after your immersion (baptism), you are worshiping with the body of Christ like the one you read about in the New Testament.

Arranging for Someone to Immerse (Baptize) You

It is not necessary that the person who immerses (baptizes) you be a Christian, or even a believer. It would be better if this were the case, of course, but God is mainly interested in your heart. You should tell him why you are being immersed (baptized). You may have an opportunity to teach him the gospel too. Perhaps he will wish you to immerse (baptize) him.

Just like the Ethiopian officer, you will want to look for a body of water (Acts 8:36). Some people you a tank (baptistry) to immerse (baptize) people in. But an ocean, a river, a lake or pond is just as good. Or, sometimes people are immersed (baptized) in a swimming pool, with hundreds of others watching. The only requirement is that there be enough water to completely cover (or bury) a person. Depending on the depth of the body of water, the one who is to be immersed usually stands (or sits) in the water. He is gently lowered (laying back) into the water. Before doing this, he should "confess" that he believes in Jesus Christ--before anyone who is present. The immerse (baptizer) should make a statement like "I now immerse you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--for the forgiveness of your sins" (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38). The person is then submerged in the water, and brought back up quickly. It does not matter when it is done, what one is wearing, or how many people witness it. It matters only that a person obey the gospel.