

WHICH DIRECTIONS SHALL WE IGNORE
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In a list of driving directions from one destination to another, which ones would we remove and still feel confident of reaching our destination? Which of the scriptures about how to be saved, all given by a God who cannot lie, are we comfortable eliminating and still being assured of being saved? Let's briefly look at just a few from the list of directions on how to get from here to an eternal life as the bride of Jesus Christ.

The most obvious truth is that before we can be saved by God, we must believe there is a God. We would not think of entrusting our health care to someone we did not believe was a doctor. Likewise, we do not call on God unless we believe one exists with the power to help us. Scriptures setting belief in God as a prerequisite for salvation include; Psalms 53:1, Luke 8:12, Acts 2:21, Matthew 14:29-30, John 3:16, James 2:19, Hebrews 11:6, Acts 10:43, and Romans 1:16.

A second group of scriptures instructs us we cannot save ourselves. It is impossible to be good enough to earn our righteousness. We would like that capability, because it would make it possible to save ourselves. We could eliminate the need for a Savior and the subsequent debt placed on our lives by His sacrifice. The teaching of "karma" claims if our good deeds outweigh the bad at the end of our life, we win. Unfortunately, God says otherwise in; Psalms 14:3, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 4:1-6, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Titus 3:5.

It is also not possible to be saved from a life of sin without willingness on our part to turn away from, and forsake, that life of sin. Our decision to abandon our disobedience and live a life dedicated to God is called "repentance." It involves sorrow for our past failings, but far more than that, it is a deliberate decision and personal commitment to walk with God. Without that commitment, our sin cannot be forgiven by God. I base this on; Mark 1:4, Romans 10:9-10, 1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Acts 2:38, Ezekiel 18:21-23, 27, and 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Once we have repented and turned from sin, it becomes important those sins are removed from us. While present, they stand between us and a holy God who does not dwell with unrighteousness. The ordinance of baptism, in the name of Jesus, is given in scripture as the means by which the guilt of our past is removed from us and our eternal record. Is it necessary for salvation? Only if we want our record expunged! I base this on Matthew 28:18-19 (I know what it says. What is the singular **name** of those three roles?), Acts 19:5, Acts 4:12, Romans 6:3-4, Acts 19:3-5, Mark 16:16, and Acts 22:16.

If baptism removes the sins from our record committed up to that point, how do we remain free from sin afterwards? It is true no one is capable of living without some sin in their lives. We do have the ability, through further repentance, to have our subsequent sins also covered by the blood of Christ. But by far, the easiest way to deal with ongoing temptation is simply to allow God to come and live within us. This is done by allowing Him, in His incarnation as the Holy Ghost, to inhabit us and direct our lives from within. That indwelling is actually part of His plan for our salvation according to; John 14:26, Romans 8:9, John 14:16-18, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 1:8, and Isaiah 28:11-12

The prize in any race only goes to those who complete the contest. The analogy of salvation to a race is used in scripture; admonishing us salvation only belongs to those who finish life free from sin. Contrary to what we would like to believe, obtaining salvation is no guarantee of keeping it. To be saved means we must finish the race strong, if we can believe; Matthew 7:22-23, Hebrews 10:26-29, 1 Peter 4:18, Matthew 10:22, and 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

I have listed a fair number of scriptures giving different things we must do to obtain salvation, obtain the kingdom of heaven, get eternal life, etc... They are worth looking up and reading in the context in which they were written. The reason they are important is that 2 Timothy 3:16 claims all scripture is given by God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Numbers 23:19 and other scriptures assure us God cannot lie. Consequently, to establish a doctrine defining salvation on any single scripture is to declare all other scripture giving different or additional instructions for salvation as being, either not from God, or a lie. If all scripture is given by a God who cannot lie, any doctrine regarding any subject is in some degree of error, so long as it contradicts any single scripture. Only when our beliefs include, and are in agreement with, all

the Bible can we be sure we have rightly divided the Word and found Truth.

Some use the understanding of salvation given to those in their pasts to justify ignoring the understanding they are given in our time. A standard accusation is, "Are you saying my _____ is lost and in Hell?" No one except the offended one said that. The Word of God makes it clear we are all to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. That is why the Spirit of God has worked throughout time to miraculously preserve His Word and make it available for those who thirst after righteousness. There are many in the past who sought after salvation, did all they understood they were to do, and have gone on to be with God. It is for no one to say they did not walk in the light as they were shown the light. There is only one Judge over men. Nonetheless, we are also responsible to walk in the light we are shown.

Jesus said He did not come to condemn the world, but that we would still be judged by every word coming from His mouth. The Word of God is one of three things that testify against us in the book of Revelation. If is critical we seek out everything it will testify concerning us. The end goal is ultimately not to be right, but to be righteous in the sight of God. This requires we obey everything we are commanded by the God who defined sin as disobedience to His instructions.