

Repent – what does this mean?

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Every Christian understands the words “Repent” and “Repentance” but do we all perceive the meaning of this word in the same way?

Sadly, the answer to this question is a resounding NO. There are actually 2 main views on what repentance is within Christianity and they are very far apart in application. The first declares repentance as the belief that Jesus died for our sins. In other words repentance is a belief in an event. The second view is that repentance is an action word meaning to change direction from what one was doing before to something else.

Let us look at an example of the former. Here is an article reaching non-believers on the internet explaining the Gospel message and what one must do to be saved:

My Friend: I am asking you the most important question of life. Your joy or your sorrow for all eternity depends upon your answer. The question is: Are you saved? It is not a question of how good you are, nor if you are a church member, but are you saved? Are you sure you will go to Heaven when you die?

God says in order to go to Heaven, you must be born again. In John 3:7, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.”

In the Bible God gives us the plan of how to be born again which means to be saved. His plan is simple! You can be saved today. How?

First, my friend, you must realize you are a sinner; “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Because you are a sinner, you are condemned to death. “For the wages [payment] of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This includes eternal separation from God in Hell.

“. . . It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

But God loved you so much He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to bear your sin and die in your place. “. . . He hath made Him [Jesus, Who knew no sin] to be sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus had to shed His blood and die. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11). “. . . without shedding of blood there is no remission [pardon]” (Hebrews 9:22).

“. . . God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Although we cannot understand how, God said my sins and your sins were laid upon Jesus and He died in our place. He became our substitute. It is true. God cannot lie.

My friend, “God . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). This repentance is a change of mind that agrees with God that one is a sinner, and also agrees with what Jesus did for us on the Cross.

In Acts 16:30-31, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas: “. . . ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved’”

Simply believe on Him as the one who bore your sin, died in your place, was buried, and whom God resurrected. His resurrection powerfully assures that the believer can claim everlasting life when Jesus is received as Savior.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13).

Whosoever includes you, you shall be saved means not maybe, nor can, but shall be saved. (Porter, 1991)

I have underlined the salient points in the message above; repentance according to the author is a change of mind to believe one is a sinner and in need of a saviour and all that one need do is believe that He died in your place, was buried and resurrected. However this leaves a shortfall in the message, repentance is not a belief but an action. Simply believing is not enough as demons believe this as does Satan but they are not saved. (James 2:19)

Let us examine the dictionary meaning of Repent – intransitive verb1) to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life 2) *a*: to feel regret or contrition *b*: to change one's mind. (Merriam-Webster)

As is apparent *repent* is a verb, a verb is an action word. However the action that must be taken is what is in dispute. Is the action a change of mind to believe one thing over another, or is it an action word that defines a change in lifestyle and not only belief?

If the former, then the Gospel message Porter has given above is adequate and salvation can be achieved by the simple hearing of the word and a choice to believe it is true. However, if the latter is true then we have a problem because a simple belief alone is not sufficient. In order to understand the true meaning of *repent* and *repentance* we must turn to scripture as the “final authority” for proof as to which is required of us. In this way we will have an accurate and Godly perspective on what *He* decreed we need to do as opposed to the doctrines of men which may in fact counter the Gospel for a false Gospel that leads men astray or even into complete heresy.

Before we turn to scripture I would proffer that it is both the above that lead to salvation, first comes the understanding and belief that Jesus died and rose again for our sins and we must believe this, but I would also contend that this is the first step of repentance. One must believe before one can act, therefore repentance is a two stage act. First believe and realise one is a sinner and that Jesus can change this, then turn one's life around to no longer follow sin, leave your old life and follow a new. If this is so, let us examine what scripture says is the correct stance and Gospel message.

Salvation

The passages quoted that lead to salvation are clear and concise and 90% of evangelists use them to reach the lost.

1. Admit you are a sinner.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (**Romans 3:23**)

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" (**Romans 5:12**)

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
(**1 John 1:10**)

2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent).

Jesus said: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
(**Luke 13:5**)

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:" (**Acts 17:30**)

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried, and rose from the dead.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (**John 3:16**)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us." (**Romans 5:8**)

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (**Romans 10:9**)

4. Through prayer, invite Jesus into your life to become your personal Saviour.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (**Romans 10:10**)

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
(**Romans 10:13**)

However, as we examine these scriptures, a shortfall can be recognised. A scripture with the word repent is used with no definition of the action required. It is almost as if the repent part is being glossed over and the salvation side (which is of God) as all that is important.

Repentance is something man must do to enact his part of the covenant of salvation with God. A covenant is a contract, no matter how it is worded or for what purpose is always "I will do this if you do that" unless it is an unconditional contract which contrary to popular belief and the deception of Satan salvation is not. It is a free gift, but one given on a condition for acceptance

Repentance is not a belief in something, repentance is an action word, it is something you must do and not just believe. To repent means to change direction, to no longer continue on the path you were on. You are to follow a new path, the path of salvation and obedience to

God. Yes we are saved by belief in Jesus and what He has done for us, but this offering in the first place is conditional upon an act on the recipient's part: "if you love me you will obey my commandments" – obeying His commandments is a reversal of the rejection and following of sin which was occurring before we accepted Jesus. This is a real life, practical change of mind and direction in life.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

This is nothing new as we see the same instruction to Israel throughout history; (KJV) Exodus 16:28; 20:6; Leviticus 22:31; 26:3; Deuteronomy. 5:10,29; 1Kings 3:14; 6:12; 9:6; 11:38; 2Kings 17:13; 1Chronicles 29:19; Nehemiah 1:9; Psalms 89:31; 119:115; Proverbs 3:1; 4:4; 7:1,2; Daniel 9:4.

This is a direct commandment from the God of the universe. What are His commandments? They are the instructions on living given in the first five books of Moses, also known as the Pentateuch or *Torah*: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and expanded upon in the New Testament. Torah is the Hebrew word which describes the teachings of God given on living life and His commandments for righteous living. Sadly the word Torah has been translated as Law in the scriptures which brings about an entirely different connotation and meaning that was never intended by God.

Sin in the scriptures is referred to as "missing the mark"; the mark referred to is the Torah, the instructions on holy living. I am not stating that we are to observe the sacrificial system as that part of the Torah is no longer in force, Jesus was and is the final sacrifice fulfilling forever the need for this system to help with the forgiveness of sin. However the rest of Torah is. Torah has been translated as "Law" in the English translations of the bible, in both the Old Testament and the New, and it is this that has caused much confusion about how the Jews were saved and what we are supposed to do today to remain in Gods "Good Books" as it were. How we are to live, and what is expected of us.

I am not intimating that we have to work to keep our salvation as that part is assured once the decision has been made to follow Jesus, but what I am saying is that the proof of that transition is the desire to walk in the righteousness of God and walk the walk He decreed, to change direction and no longer follow the path of the world but the path of righteousness laid out in the Torah..

The observance of Torah (Gods handbook on righteous living) is seen as so important that once the New Covenant was made it would be written on the hearts of believers (Jeremiah 31:33). It would be written so that with the help of the Holy Spirit we could observe it and not have our consciences give us trouble (Romans 2:15). It is by the fact that we have the Torah within us that we are prompted to do right. However it is the denial or resistance to the Torah that will lead to the "conscience being seared like a hot iron" (1Timothy 4:2). Read 1 timothy 4 and you will see the results of not observing Torah and the result of men believing

they are right in their own ways: “They forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods which God created to be eaten with thanksgiving by those who have come to trust and to know the truth”.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16 KJV)

Here, Paul (Rabbi Sha'ul) is stating that the Jews that have come to believe in the Messiah know that works alone will not save them. It is faith in Adonai that has always saved – right throughout the biblical texts, never the Torah or Law alone. Paul is saying that the Torah will never bring us into Justification because we cannot keep all the Torah, as we are human and we will make mistakes and break the Torah, we would not have need for the waited Messiah to come if we could justify ourselves through our own ability to keep the Torah. The purpose of the Torah is for sanctification of the believer after justification has taken place. Remembering that justification comes through the gift of Adonai's Salvation, but sanctification comes through the decision to turn one's life around and follow the commandments of Adonai and not one's own ways any longer. Both happen at salvation – the decision to repent and follow God happens at the same time you are saved by grace. They are both symbiotic and inseparable from each other; you cannot have them separately.

We are no longer to be walking the path of Torah rejection but the righteous life explained in Torah. Torah is not law; Torah is the handbook to righteous living. If the Torah is still to be recognized as the Law and to be considered by the church as the 613 laws of the Old Testament, then how does one reconcile the fact that there are 1050 commandments in the New Testament? All built upon the commandments of the Old Testament except without the sacrificial system, other than dying to self.

The Torah is our operator's manual or guidebook showing us how Elohim wants us to walk and relate to Him and each other.

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