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PLAN OF SALVATION IN ACTS

Sometimes when teaching people about the Lord's plan of salvation in Acts (faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism), we are asked why is it that one person might be told to be baptized (Acts 22:16) while another is told to believe (Acts 16:30). Still, another is told to repent (Acts 2:38) or confess Christ (Acts 8:37)? Where is the example of a person or group of people being told the entire plan of salvation in the book of Acts? The closest answer I can find is in Acts 2. There, the people were told to "hear" God's word (v. 22) and believe (v. 36, to "know assuredly," is to believe). After these believers asked what to do (v. 37), they were told to "*repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins*" (v. 38). In this text, we find everything but the confession of Christ specifically mentioned. Furthermore, Acts 8:12-13, 16:13-14, 18:8, and 19:4-5 are passages that precisely parallel Mark 16:16. It might seem strange to us that the

plan of salvation that we hear so often in sermons is not repeated verbatim to people in the book of Acts. It seems that pieces of this plan are taught but not all of it at once. Why not? I am not going to say I have the definitive answer, but perhaps my explanation will shed some light on this question. First, I think there is something to be said for the form of speech called "synecdoche," where one word stands for more than one thing. For example, when the Bible speaks of the Lord's Supper and uses the term "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) or "break bread" (Acts 20:7), I know it also includes partaking of the fruit of the vine and prayers with eating the unleavened bread (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:22-25). Using one term to stand for the entire act is not uncommon in the Bible. Therefore, when we read about someone's salvation, and we read only of "baptism" (Acts 22:16), "faith" (Acts 4:4), or "repentance" (Acts 11:18), etc., I know that this word stands for

the entire plan of salvation in context. However, there is a second explanation that I believe really gets to the heart of this matter when we speak about this supposed “inconsistency” in Acts concerning the plan of salvation. Imagine someone asking you how far it is to the Grand Canyon. If you lived in Indiana, you would answer around 1700 miles. If the person asked someone living in Kansas, the answer would be around 1000 miles. Someone in Albuquerque, NM, would answer that it is only 400 miles to the Grand Canyon. However, someone in Flagstaff, AZ, might tell our friend it is 80 miles to the Grand Canyon. Why did this person get a different answer to the same question? Does the Grand Canyon move? Did those who were asked about the Grand Canyon not understand the question? We know why there are different answers. It is because we are starting in different places! If we had asked five people living in Flagstaff how far it is to the Grand Canyon, they would have given us the same answer. However, when we ask people who live in different areas of the country, we get different answers. Thus it is with the plan of salvation as described in the book of Acts. This book describes people who are introduced to the Lord at different stages of their lives. If those being taught didn’t even believe in God, they would be told about God and to believe on

Him (Acts 16:30, 17:24-28). At the same time, the one who already believes in God or in Christ does not need to be told to believe, but to repent of sins and be baptized (Acts 2:38)! The person who believes and has repented might be told to be baptized with little explanation otherwise (Acts 22:16). This is not because there are different plans of salvation or because the Bible is inconsistent. It is because the teachers taught the people what they still lacked (Acts 18:24-28). They didn’t go back and try to convince them of the things they had already accepted. Please study the chart below. Notice that while the complete plan of salvation is taught in the book of Acts (faith, repentance, confession, baptism), the people were often told the things they still lacked. They were not always told what they had attained or achieved already. While the chart goes an extra step by showing us what the people had done, a careful reading of the Bible text reveals that the teachers did not always mention each step in the Lord’s plan! Someone might say, “Brother Jacobs, when I hear you preach, you preach the plan of salvation the same way every time. Why do you do this?” It is because when I am preaching to a group of people, I do not know where every listener might be in their spiritual walk. Thus, it is up to each person to listen and see where he is so he knows how

much “farther” he needs to travel to reach the blood of Christ! Does this person believe in Christ (Jn. 8:24; Acts 2:36)? Has he repented of sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30)? Has he confessed his faith like the eunuch (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10)? Has he been baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16)? Only this person and God know the truth.

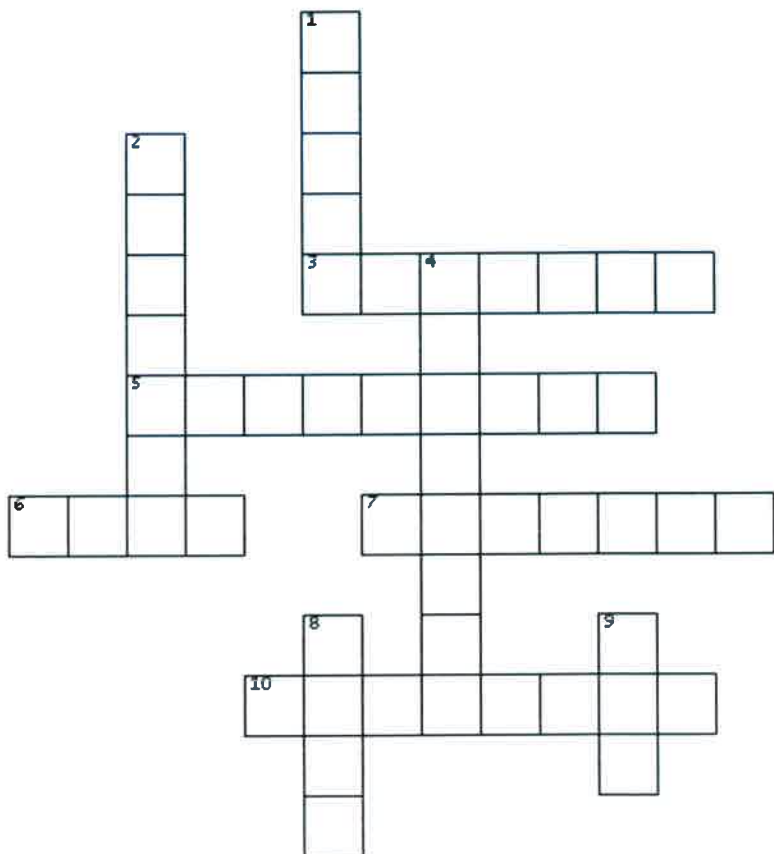
It was not inconsistent for a teacher in the New Testament to state the things a person still lacked without naming all the things the person had already done. It is not wrong for us today to remind people of the entire plan of salvation so that those being taught can be sure they have done all God expects of them. – Jarrod Jacobs **Thoughts**

On Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* This is a

straightforward sentence and loaded with meaning! *“All have sinned.”* No one can say he has not sinned. This fact was repeated by John in I John 1:8 and 10. All of us have sinned through the transgression of God’s law (I Jn. 3:4) or omitting God’s commands (Jas. 4:7), or both! All have sinned because we have given in to temptation (Jas. 1:14). The result is that we fall short of God’s glory. Saying we *“come short”* (“fall short,” LSB) of God’s glory declares that we are not “born short” of God’s glory. No one is born in sin. Instead, sin results from our yielding to temptation (Jas. 1:14-

15). Thankfully, Romans 3:23 is not the end of the story! Though we all have sinned, we also can be assured that Christ provides forgiveness (Rom 6:23). God’s forgiveness is real and available to all who have sinned (Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:16)! Are you saved or living in sin? – Jarrod Jacobs

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ACROSS

3. Mary called Jesus this Hebrew word meaning "Teacher" (Jn. 20:16)
5. Mary _____ came to the empty tomb seeking Jesus (Jn. 20:1)
6. Jesus helped the disciples catch 153 _____ (Jn. 21:11)
7. Jesus asked Mary, "Why are you _____?" (Jn. 20:15)
10. Mary thought Jesus was the _____ (Jn. 20:15)

DOWN

1. John beat _____ in a foot race to the empty tomb (Jn. 20:4)
2. Thomas was also called _____ (Jn. 20:24)
4. When John looked into the empty tomb he _____ (Jn. 20:8)
8. Nathanael was from the town of Jesus' first miracle (Jn. 21:2)
9. Thomas would not believe unless he could _____ (Jn. 20:25)