

THE CONDITION TO BE SAVED

What is the condition established by God in the Bible for the sinner to be saved?

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INTRODUCTION

In 1967 in Argentina we experienced a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, especially on non-Pentecostal pastors and churches. The Spirit led us to experience a wonderful spiritual renewal: praise, worship, baptism of the Holy Spirit, new tongues, prophecy, healing, happiness and joy in the meetings, praise with dance, a great freedom of the Spirit in the meetings, fire and zeal, etc.

At first we thought that was all we needed to serve and please God. We were far from imagining what would come next.

Since 1968, God began to give us revelation about old truths of the Word that for us until then were hidden. The next four or five years were of intense revelation. God, by the Spirit, opened our spiritual eyes and we knew we were facing a new Reform and that we needed to return to the Word of God, to the foundation established by the apostles and prophets in the New Testament.

The central truths that the Lord taught us was the gospel of the kingdom of God and the Lordship of Christ, the discipleship, the unity of the church, the validity of all the gifts and ministries, the didaké (doctrine) and the apostolic kerygma (proclamation), the indissolubility of the covenant of marriage, the unity of the church in every city, the training and education of workers according to the ministries shown in Ephesians 4, the whole mission of the church in the world, and other truths of the Word.

The subject of this consultation is THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and my specific topic:

What is the condition established by God in the Bible for the sinner to be saved?

This has to do with the revelation we received from God in 1968, about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

APPROACH

In the past, for many years most evangelical preachers (among whom I was included) perhaps inspired by the great international preachers and an unbalanced emphasis on the grace, have proclaimed that the condition for a sinner to be saved is to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Of course, Jesus Christ is the only Savior of all people in all nations and of all generations. He is the glorious and mighty Savior. Without Jesus there is not salvation (Acts 4.12). He is the only

way, the only truth and the only life. No one comes to the Father but by him. We have no doubt about it.

But that is not our question. The point is: According to the Bible, what is God's condition for the sinner to be saved?

It is amazing, but we can't find any scripture in the New Testament affirming that Jesus saves us by receiving him as our Savior.

The apostle Paul, in Romans 10:8-9, declares: ***This is the word of faith we preach, that if you confess with your lips, Jesus is Lord (Kyrios), and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.***

Not only this verse says so, a careful study of the New Testament reveals us that the CONDITION to be saved is to recognize Jesus Christ as "KYRIOS". The English translation of this Greek word is LORD.

- The apostle Peter, in Pentecost's day, ends up his preaching with these words: ***"This Jesus, whom you nailed to the cross, God has made Lord (KYRIOS) and Messiah" (Acts 2:36).***
- Paul said to the jailer of the Philippian's prison, when he asked "What must I do to be saved?": ***"Believe in the Kyrios (Lord) Jesus and you will be saved" (Acts.16:30-31)***
- In 2nd. Corinthians 4:5, the apostle says: ***"We preach Jesus Christ as Kyrios (Lord)".***
- In 1st. Corinth.1:2, he affirms that the church includes ***"all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Kyrios (Lord), their Lord and ours".***

It is interesting to consider the frequency in which the New Testament uses the following terms:

The term "LORD" ("Kyrios" in Greek), in reference to Jesus, is mentioned in the New Testament more than 600 times. The term "SAVIOR" (In greek, SOTER), in reference to Jesus, is mentioned only 16 times.

	KYRIOS (LORD)	SOTER (SAVIOR)
In the Gospels	130	2
In Acts	170	2
In Paul's epistles	260	6
Rest of N.Test.	50	6
TOTAL	610	16

Is this just a question of terms?

Certainly not! This is a fundamental question connected with the theology of salvation (SOTERIOLOGY), and requires from us a serious consideration.

JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD

Philippians 2:5-11

- 5 ***Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,***
- 6 ***who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,***
- 7 ***but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.***
- 8 ***Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

- 9 ***For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,***
10 ***so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,***
11 ***and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

We can observe in these verses a movement in two principal directions: down-wards and up-wards.

The first movement: down-wards

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. Paul describes the attitude that was in Christ: he who was in the form of God did not consider being equal to God *a thing to be grasped*.

GOD BECAME A MAN!

Christ existed before he was born. He existed in the form of God. He was God. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, says (John 1.1).* Christ, being God, did not consider being God a position to be grasped, but he undressed of his divine dresses, and came to the world not in the condition of God but in the likeness of men, in the condition of a man.

God, the supreme being of the universe, the Creator, acquired the form of his creature. This is the attitude we found in Christ, he decided to descend, humiliate himself and come to the earth to save us.

HE BECAME A SLAVE!

Being in that condition, he humiliated himself among men and took the form of a servant. All his life was directed to serve. In the upper room he took the towel and knelt down to wash the dirty feet of his disciples. That service ought to be done by the least important slave, but Jesus descended to do it. Being God, he became man; being man, he became a servant.

HE WAS OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH!

But still there is another step in this humiliation of Jesus Christ: being a servant, he humiliated a step forward, becoming obedient unto death, and death on a cross.

Christ descended to the lowest place in the universe. There is not a worse site in the world. In effect, in Calvary he took upon himself the curse of our sins.

The highest being in the universe descended to the lowest place. At the cross he took upon himself all our hell! Thank you Lord!

The second movement: up-wards

A big change happened in verse 9: *"For this reason..."* What reason? Due to the fact that Jesus humiliated himself to the lowest place, the Father raised him and exalted him to the highest. He who humiliates himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humiliated.

In his exaltation Christ received from the Father two things: The highest place, and a name above every name. At that name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. All beings in the universe —angels, principalities, demons, human beings (believers or unbelievers), all creatures in heaven, on earth and underneath the earth— will one day prostrate before Jesus and will confess that **Jesus Christ is the Lord**. Amen.

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME

This name is "LORD" ("Kyrios" in Greek), a name that is above all names that exist in the universe. There is no highest name on rank or hierarchy. This is the name he received from the Father when he rose him from the dead and sat him at his right hand in heaven.

Jesus is his historical name. Christ, his prophetic name. To Jesus Christ —the historical person, who is the accomplishment of the prophecies— the Father called THE LORD.

KYRIOS

But today, in English the word LORD doesn't have the force it had in the original Greek in which Paul wrote this letter; in fact, neither is it used as it was in the Roman Empire. Jesus Christ is the KYRIOS!

How could we translate Kyrios into English for fully understanding it?

The word Kyrios had a very ample and rich meaning. We need to use several terms to translate it.

Boss + Owner + Master + Sovereign + Maximum Authority = KYRIOS = LORD

So that when somebody confesses "Jesus Christ is my Lord, my KYRIOS," he is saying: "Jesus is my boss, he commands my life. He is also my owner and my master. My life is totally his. All that I am and have belong to Jesus Christ. He is my master; I am his slave. I am under his absolute authority. He is my Lord.

In the days of the Roman Empire the word "kyrios" had two uses. In the current sense it was used to designate all wealthy persons, owning many properties, and having slaves under their authority. In fact, there were many slaves in the Empire. Each slave had a kyrios, an owner, who was his master and the authority upon his life.

SLAVES OF JESUS CHRIST

The apostle Paul begins his letter to the Philippians in this way: "Paul and Timothy, *servants* of Jesus Christ..." In Greek, the word 'servant' is 'doulos', and it literally means 'slave'. When Jesus is our Lord, we are Jesus' slaves.

THE CAESAR IS THE KYRIOS

We have considered the first use of the word Kyrios. The second use of this term in the Roman Empire, in an absolute sense, could refer only to one person: the Caesar of Rome, the emperor. All inhabitants of the Empire had to confess: "The Caesar is the Kyrios". Instead, the Christians' confessed: "Jesus Christ is the Kyrios". Many a time the persecution started for this reason.

Those Christians preferred to confess Christ as Lord and die if necessary, than denying the name of Jesus and live. The Caesar acted as the Kyrios throughout the Roman Empire: The boss, the owner of all the empire. He was the sovereign, the maximum authority of the empire.

The word Kyrios, during the first century, was also used in another strong way. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament translated the Hebrew word 'Adonai' (synonymous of the word 'God') as 'Kyrios'. For this reason, the term Kyrios, with capital K, meant God. To use the title Kyrios for the Roman emperors was the highest blasphemous pretension. They wanted to be god.

During the days of the Roman Empire, Paul saw another Empire beginning to develop and extend on earth: The Kingdom of God. It was the Empire of the true and permanent Kyrios, Jesus Christ. He was the true King, the true LORD, the real Owner of everything and everyone. He was the true God, worthy of supreme praise, the Only one who deserved to be worshiped. The Father exalted him over all authority, above all names forever. Halleluiah!

But the climax of these verses is the Father universal order. God ordered every knee to bow before his Son, and every tongue to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

And those who do, will be saved (Rom. 10.9); and those who do not, are rebelling against the commandment of the Father, and confirming their sin and condemnation.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The name Kyrios marks a tremendous difference between the Christians of the first centuries and the majority of the Christians today. When this name shone before my eyes and the Spirit of God revealed his transcendental importance, I began to read and study the gospels again. I

wanted to learn how Jesus preached the gospel and called the men to conversion. I was surprised, ashamed and astonished.

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages preaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Matthew 4.23:

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people

Matthew 9.35:

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Luke 8.1:

Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God.

He called the people to repentance, saying (Mark 1.15): *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"*

How did the kingdom come to the individuals? Come in the person of the King. When Christ approached somebody, he put him before a great dilemma: to enter the Kingdom or to remain outside it. How could someone enter? Subordinating himself, subjecting completely to the authority of the King Jesus. This meant to recognize Jesus as owner and Lord. Some examples will help us to understand it better.

SIMON AND ANDREW

Jesus Christ is in Capharnaum. He approaches the shores of the Galilean sea. There he finds two men fishing: Peter and his brother Andrew. Christ approaches them and gives them an order: *"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"*. He is not asking them, nor making a suggestion; he is giving them an order. What do we do when we are given an order? We either obey or disobey it. There is no other alternative. Peter could react and say: *"A moment, please. I am the owner and lord of my life"*. Peter and Andrew understand in that very moment that in front of them there is someone with authority calling them to follow him. I imagine that in their hearts there was a struggle. But finally, both leave their nets and follow Jesus. What does it mean for them? A simple but important thing: *"Now we are subject to Jesus. Now he commands our lives."* If Peter has to tell us about that experience, he would say: *"Up to that moment, I was the owner and the Lord of my life; since then, Jesus Christ is"*.

MATTHEW

Another day in the same town, Jesus approaches a collector of taxes called Matthew. Jesus does not tell him: *"Matthew, if you receive me as your personal Savior you will be saved"*. No! Christ commands him: *"Follow me!"* Put yourself for one moment in Matthew's place. You are working, and then somebody approaches you and says with authority: *"Follow me!"* What does that mean? Who is this man? Why following him? What do I do? Matthew has a struggle inside himself; his own nature offers resistance to obeying that command. But... finally Matthew decides to subject to Jesus. He stands up, pushes the table aside and decides definitely to follow Jesus. That is all. Perhaps the head of the office asks him:

- Matthew, where are you going?

- I am following Jesus.

- But, Matthew, and your job?

- Now, he is my master.

- And..., when are you going to return?

- I don't know. I will do whatever he says. Now Jesus commands my life.

Matthew could synthesize his experience this way: *"Up to that moment I commanded my life, but now Christ commands it"*. Since that moment Matthew recognizes Jesus as Lord.

ZACCHAEUS

In Jericho lives a man called Zacchaeus. He has a great desire to see Jesus, but being of a short stature, he climbs a tree. Christ stops under that tree and says to Zacchaeus: "Get down quickly, because I will stay with at your home today". Zacchaeus thinks: "Who he is? Out of his own decision he comes to my house, and he orders me to do things soon". Zacchaeus stands at the front door of the kingdom of God and he decides to obey Jesus. Zacchaeus runs to his house, and tells his wife:

- Please, soon! get the table ready because Jesus is coming to our house.
- Is Jesus coming here? And you invited him?
- No, I did not invite him.
- Then...?
- He invited himself.
- How is it that he is coming if you did not invite him? Who is the authority in this house?

That is the great question!

- Until now I, Zacchaeus, was in charge. From now on, Jesus is in charge.

So Jesus arrives. In the middle of the supper, Zacchaeus stands and says: "*Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.*". How does this change take place in Zacchaeus life? Because in that moment he puts himself completely under the authority of Jesus. Christ, then, says: "*Today salvation has come to this house*". When the lost and rebel man changes his attitude and he subjects to the will of God, he finds salvation.

A RICH YOUNG MAN

A very rich young man comes to Jesus and asks him:

- Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.
- Master, all these things I have kept since I was a boy. Is there anything else?
- One thing you lack -Jesus says. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven. Then come, follow me.

The young man becomes sad. He is very rich.

But, Lord, to receive eternal life one must sell everything? Don't we receive salvation free? The young man is at the front door of the Kingdom, but he does not accept Jesus as Lord. He thinks: "I am the owner of my life and of my possessions". He is very near to the kingdom but he does not enter. When he goes away, Jesus says to his disciples: "*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*"

But, to enter the kingdom of God is it necessary to sell everything? Entering the Kingdom is not a question of selling or buying; there is a single requirement: to recognize Christ as Lord, as the absolute authority over our life.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The kingdom of God is not a place or a land. It's not heaven. It's not the church. It's not anything else, an object or a state.

Grammatically, the word kingdom is a noun. There are nouns that indicate material things, people, places, feelings, etc. But there are also nouns that indicate action. For example: If you seek for the word "salvation" in the dictionary, you find this explanation: "action of saving" / Preparation: "action of preparing". Kingdom is a substantive that indicates action: the action of reigning.

GOD REIGNS

The kingdom of God is the greatest reality in universe, is the enormous and absolute fact that the Lord reigns! It is not possible to capture this truth with our physical eyes. For this reason Jesus said: *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3.3). The universe is not going astray. The universe has a center. In that center there is a throne. In that throne God is seated. **He reigns!** He has always reigned. His kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and his lordship for all generations. His throne is established of old and forever. He reigns over all things that exist. He sustains all things through his powerful word. He is the supreme authority in the universe. He reigns above the angels, above principalities and powers, above Satan and his demons. He reigns over the nations, over the kings, over mankind, over all creation. He is Lord of the history.

GOD IS THE OWNER OF THE UNIVERSE

The kingdom of God means also that He is the only **owner** of all things in the universe. *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein"*. All things in the world are his; all the fields, mountains, seas, fishes; all the flora, fauna, minerals, humans. Everything, absolutely, is the Lord's. He is the real and true owner, because he created all things. We are not owners of anything. Nothing is ours. Our body, our family, our children, our house, our land, our money, our life, our time, our health, our gifts, everything, absolutely everything, belongs to God.

GOD IS THE UNIVERSAL JUDGE

Another implication of the Kingdom of God is that God is the universal Judge. One day all of us will have to present ourselves before him for judgment, to determine whether or not we lived according to his will. And to give an account of what we did with the material goods that he put under our administration. Nobody will escape on that day. The Bible says: *"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"*. (Heb.9.27).

THE KINGDOM ARRIVED

The King of the Universe was made man in the person of the Son of God. The Word was made flesh. The King was made a servant. The universe's owner was made poor. The creator was made a creature. The judge left his throne to occupy the sinner's place. Why?

All of us rebelled against the Kingdom of God. We sinned against God. We did not recognize his authority. We lived according to our own will. But He loved us. He came to save us, to give us a new opportunity. He came to call us to repentance, to call us to his kingdom.

FOR OUR CONSIDERATION

1. WHAT IS SIN?

What did Adam and Eve do? Did they kill someone? No. Did they steal? No. Did they blaspheme against the Holy Spirit? No. What was, then, the evil thing they had committed? Up to certain day they lived subject to the authority of God; but one day they had the unfortunate idea of doing their own will. What is the biggest sin? To do my own will, to live as I want and not as God wants. The essence of sin is rebellion against God.

2. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

The Scriptures are very clear when they say that repentance is an essential condition to receive forgiveness and salvation (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38 and 3:19).

To repent is not merely to say I'm sorry, or to ask to be forgiven for having offended God. The real repentance (in Greek: *metanoia*) means a change of mind and attitude toward God. Our inner attitude brings about our way of thinking, feeling and acting.

Everybody has basically one of these two attitudes before God: rebellion or submission. The natural attitude of men -children of Adam- before God is rebellion. It's our natural inheritance.

The rebellion toward God does not show up in an open and aggressive way. Generally it expresses itself in a more subtle way: being independent from God, showing indifference toward his laws, living as we please. The rebellious attitude toward God is the root of all other sins. When the sinner converts, he resigns his rebellion and puts his life and his will under the authority of Jesus, in submission to the Lord.

This new attitude of submission to Christ implies submission to his Word. Without submission there is not repentance and, therefore, no salvation.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23: "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*". This scripture refers to those who believe in him, pray, prophesize, drive out demons, and make miracles, but don't do the will of God.

Jesus, in the next verses admonishes clearly: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand". It's not enough to hear the word of God, to study the Bible, to preach the Bible; it is necessary to live according to the Word. To be built on the rock is to hear and do what Jesus teaches.

3. WHAT GOSPEL WE PREACH?

The apostles never mutilated the gospel by presenting Jesus only as Savior. The apostolic proclamation says: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died, rose from the dead, and is the Lord.

To accept Jesus only as a personal Savior is trying to receive forgiveness, salvation, peace, happiness and eternal life without a real submission to the authority to Jesus. And that possibility does not exist in the New Testament. Jesus saves me and gives me all the benefits of salvation when I bow my knees before him and confess him as Lord. This is the end of my rebellion and the acceptance of his government over my life. It means the complete surrendering of my life, including all that I am and have, including my family, my house, my belongings, my money, my time, my plans, my everything. Absolutely, all.

To accept Jesus as Lord is to recognize him as Boss, Owner, Master and Supreme Authority of our life. For Jesus to be my Savior I need to recognize him as my Lord. **When I accept Jesus as my Lord, he becomes my Saviour.** This is the central point of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

A great English writer, C.S. Lewis, in his book 'The Great Divorce', says: Finally there will be just two kinds of people: those that say to God: "Your will be done," and those to whom God will have to say: "Your will be done."

Christ taught to us to pray: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

YOUR KINGDOM COME

There are two aspect of the kingdom of God. One, the eschatological, related to the consummation of the kingdom. It has to do with the future and will take place when the King in person descends and establishes his throne on earth.

The other aspect is the present dimension of the kingdom. That happens when we allow Christ to reign over us; and it extends more and more as people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord.