

“H.B.R.C.B”

John Dicus

Lorain Avenue Church of Christ (11-10-2024)

The title of this lesson is HBRCB. H ... B ... R ... C ... B.

It's a short lesson on what's required to become a Christian ... what it takes to become a Christian.

Most, if not all, of you here understand what I mean when I say, “become a Christian.”

My guess is that many people in the world who believe in God and in Christ and who try to live moral lives, consider themselves to be Christians, when in fact, they may not be.

And if I were to suggest upon a conversation with some of them, that they were not Christians, there would be some confusion. One or more might become angry or defensive.

They would say, “Christians have the hope of eternal life, right? And you're saying that I don't have that hope? Who are you to say such a thing?”

Well, I don't say such a thing. God says. The gospel makes it quite clear who is a Christian and who is not, and how to become a Christian.

A Christian is a disciple of Christ.

We can clearly see that Acts 11:26 says, “... and when Barnabas had found the apostle Paul, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about for that entire year, they met with the church and taught considerable numbers, and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

Disciples. Christians.

Just before His ascension back to the Father, Jesus commissioned His chosen Apostles to spread His gospel to the entire world. He commanded them saying, “All authority ...”

This is Matthew 28:18-19. “... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [disciple all nations by], baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

See how easy it is to prove, or to show, that a Christian is a disciple of Christ, and that you become a disciple of Christ by first being taught the “why” and the “how,” and then by being baptized.

Matthew 28:18-19 ... people become disciples by being taught, then by being baptized into Christ. Acts 11:26 ... Disciples are Christians.

So now, what must the person be taught in order to become a Christian? What must a person do as a result of that teaching?

To become a Christian: “HBRCB.” Hear ... Believe ... Repent ... Confess ... and be Baptized.

Now, you can't open your Bible and find the one single verse or passage ... that says all of this ... in one place.

But you can easily connect some important verses to learn this truth.

HBRCB is not a formula. It's not some mantra that you repeat, or some worn out phrase that has become too common for us to believe anymore.

It's a list. It's a summary ... of the things you must do to become a Christian ... to be saved.

You leave any one of these out, and you won't be a Christian with the hope of eternal life.

It's all of them. In this order.

Number one. Hearing God's will, the word of God, the gospel of Christ.

Number two. Believing that Jesus is God's Son, the risen Savior.

Number three. Repenting ... turning away from living for self ... and beginning to live for Christ.

Number four. Confessing aloud in the presence of witnesses, your belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ.

And number five. Submitting to baptism, a water burial, in which your sins are forgiven. It's not special water ... but the submission and action are special ... the significance is special. It is God who forgives in that burial.

Five. All five. In that order.

You cannot believe in something until you hear about it? That makes sense, right?

You cannot turn away from sin and turn to Christ until you know what sin is and trust that Christ is the only path to forgiveness and to heaven. You can't turn away from sin and turn to Him until you know what you ultimately must do to be saved "in Him" ... and be willing to do it.

You cannot stand before your fellow man and confess your faith in Christ Jesus until you believe from the heart and have committed yourself to serving Him.

And God will not forgive your sins until you say goodbye to your old ways and are buried with Christ in baptism.

Let's see some of the key verses, that when put together, define these five steps that lead a person from ignorance of God's will to salvation.

Turn with me to the Roman letter. We'll be moving around after that. But there are some key verses I want you to look at here.

First, we're going to look at Romans 10:8-10.

Verse eight. "The Word is near you ... in your mouth and in your heart." The word of God ... the Gospel of Christ ... is near ... in your mouth and in your heart. "That is the word of faith, which we are preaching."

Verse nine. "If you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Verse ten. "For with the heart, man believes resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

So, what do we have?

Romans 10:8. The Gospel is preached. It's near you. It couldn't be nearer. You heard it. It registered. You took it to heart. Now you're ready to proclaim your belief. No secret discipleship here.

Romans 10:9. You're announcing your faith in Christ and your trust in God to people around you. You're going on record.

This is the same confession that Peter made.

Do you remember in Matthew 16:16 ... Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This is the same confession that Martha made when Jesus came to raise Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:25-27, Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live even if he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

Romans 10:10. Righteousness is not possible without belief from the heart.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Yet belief alone will not make you righteous.

James 2:21 says that Abraham's action ... offering up Isaac ... is what justified Him with God. Action based on belief. Or said another way, belief resulting in action.

Belief in Jesus makes it possible to be considered righteous. Confessing this belief makes it possible to obtain salvation.

But we're not there yet. Belief and confession get us close to the goal, but not across the finish line, so to speak.

If we move down to verse thirteen ... Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Anyone and everyone.

Well, this verse tells us that we've got to call on the name of the Lord for forgiveness of sins.

How do we do that? How do we call upon the name of the Lord?

We know why ... for salvation. But how?

Some may believe it's a passionate cry or a prayerful petition. But this is not so.

Let's hold our question of "how" for a bit.

Romans 10:14-15 pictures a person progressing through God's process of salvation. It is described, sort of, in reverse.

A person begins outside of Christ, in sin. They need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

So, the question is asked, how then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?

Well, they can't, right?

And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

Well, again, they can't, right?

And how shall they hear without a preacher [or reading the scripture]?

Well, that's not possible either.

And how shall they preach unless someone is sent [or how can you read unless you have the Bible in your hands and you're willing to read it]?

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings of good things.

You begin in sin. A preacher is sent [or you open your Bible]. You hear God's will concerning Christ and salvation.

You believe Jesus is Lord with all your heart.

Your heart overflows into your mouth, and your lips confess aloud that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that the Father has raised Him from the dead.

Now, you are just about ready to call on the name of the Lord for Salvation.

There is only one whom you can call on. Jesus Christ. As Peter said in John 6:68-69, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

So, how does one do such a thing?

Joel prophesied in Joel 2:32, foretelling that when the Gospel plan of salvation was revealed and preached, those who called on the name of the Lord would be delivered from sin.

He uses those words explicitly.

Those who would call on the Lord, from the day of Pentecost forward ... would find deliverance ... would find salvation.

Now, when Peter preached that first Gospel sermon, he quoted Joel's prophecy in Acts 2:21. And after declaring Jesus as Christ, he commanded them to repent and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ ... in order to obtain forgiveness of their sins. Acts 2:38.

This is consistent, isn't it, with what we learned in Romans 10?

The gospel message was preached by Peter.

"This same Jesus whom you crucified," Peter preached in Acts 2:36, "God has made both Lord and Christ"

The gospel message was heard, it was believed and taken to heart. Acts 2:37, "They were cut to the heart."

The hearers on Pentecost were not only painfully aware of what they'd done ... in rejecting Jesus ... they were ready to repent, ready to make a change, taking whatever steps Peter commanded.

They were ready to turn from their present condition ... and turn to Christ as Lord of their life.

Put Acts 2:21 and Acts 2:38 together. Salvation is obtained by calling on the name of the Lord in baptism. "Repent," Peter commanded, "and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to have your sins remitted [forgiven]."

After Saul/Paul had witnessed the risen savior on the Damascus Road, Ananias preached to him in the city. Ananias then commanded him to get up and be baptized to wash away his sins.

Acts 22:15-16 ... "You will be a witness for Christ to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now, what are you waiting for? Why do you delay, arise, be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Peter commanded in Acts 2:38 ... "Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."

Same thing. Call on the name of the Lord ... in the name of Jesus Christ ... in order for God to forgive you of your sins.

Notice Peter says something here that's very interesting. He says, repent ... and ... be baptized.

He didn't say, "Now that you've heard, let's get you into the waters of baptism."

You've got to be willing to change. And you actually have to make the change. It has to be from the heart, not merely lip-service.

Repentance is essential. And it has to happen before baptism.

2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is patient towards you, not wishing any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

In Acts 11:18, Peter recounted his visit to the household of Cornelius.

"God has granted to the gentiles, the repentance that leads to life." God granted them the opportunity to repent and be baptized.

When Peter extended the invitation of Christ to be baptized, Cornelius and his household gladly submitted.

Luke 13:5 says, "I tell you, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish."

Luke 15:10 says, "I tell you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents,"

Colossians 2:12-13 ... takes us to the next and final step after hearing, believing, repenting and confessing ... being buried in baptism.

"Now we have been buried with Christ in baptism, in which we were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

When we go into the waters of baptism, we believe that we're going come up a new person ... a forgiven person with hope eternal. We believe that as strongly as we believe that God raised his Son from the grave.

Paul says that we were dead in our trespasses before we were buried in baptism. But God has made us alive with His Son, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

Repentance and baptism are necessary for forgiveness. God forgives in baptism when it follows repentance.

We know that they both come after belief and before baptism. So ... in what order

"Give thanks to the Father," Paul says in Colossians 1:12-14, "who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

He's qualified us to become Christians. How?

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transported us [or conveyed us] into the kingdom of the Son of his love."

He's rescued us out of the darkness of sin ... and carried us over into the kingdom of the Son of His love ... in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

How did God transfer us from sin into the light ... into the kingdom of the Son of his love ... into his Son's church?

Easy. He revealed the powerful gospel of Christ. It has been preached and we heard.

That's the "H" in HBRCB.

We believe what we've heard. Romans 10:17 says, "Now faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith comes by hearing the Gospel message. The Gospel message is contained in the Word of God."

We believe that Jesus is Lord ... from the heart.

That's the "B" in HBRCB.

We want to go in a new direction. Away from Satan. Near to God

We repent of our sinful condition. It's a change of heart. A change of will. A change is direction. A change in action.

I am on the Lord's side. Here am I, send me."

Repentance is essential. It follows belief and must precede baptism.

That's the "R" in HBRCB.

We announced our faith ... our trust ... our belief in God and in His Son.

We proclaimed it before many witnesses. Witnesses who will hold us to our word. It's like the "I Do" in a wedding ceremony. Before men and before God as our witness.

"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ... and I believe that in His name, there is eternal life.

That's the confession ... the "C" in HBRCB.

And then we were baptized, we were buried with Christ in baptism, Romans 6:4.

We rose up to walk in newness of life.

We were born anew and entered the kingdom as we read in John 3:3-5..

We were added to the church (Acts 2:41; Acts 2:47).

And that's the second "B: in HBRCB.

We've reached the goal. Forgiveness of sins. A Christian.

A question may arise as to how one can say that repentance comes before confession. It's a good question. We see that both come after belief and before baptism.

A person cannot truthfully confess their faith that Jesus is Christ if that person has not recognized their sinful condition and has committed to change. Could a man or woman about to be joined before God in marriage say "I Do," if he or she has not decided to become one flesh in marriage?

2 Corinthians 7:10 says that "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation." And it is with this sorrow we approach God in prayer, confessing our sin, and asking for forgiveness.

These five letters are an easy way to remember what it takes to become a Christian with the hope of eternal life.

We're like the Ethiopian Eunuch ... continuing on our way to Heaven rejoicing.

HBRCB. Hear ... Believe ... Repent ... Confess ...be Baptized.

Hear and receive the Gospel.

Believe Jesus died, was raised, and is coming again to take the saved home with Him to heaven.

Repent, turn to Christ, turning from sin and rejection of the Gospel message.

Confess aloud, the truth and your conviction that Jesus is Lord.

Be baptized, submit to the water burial.

You can't believe unless you hear the gospel.

You can't repent until you believe what to turn from and what to turn to.

You can't confess Jesus is Lord, and is Sovereign over your life until you repent.

You can't be baptized until you have repented and put the "old you" to death.

And you can't be saved until you have obeyed Jesus' command to become a Christian in baptism.

HBRCB.

This is how one becomes a Christian with hope eternal. It was how it was done on "day one" of the Church. It is how it is done today. It is how it is to be done until He returns for His own.

That concludes our lesson for this morning.

Your kind attention is appreciated.