



How Much Do I Have To Understand To Be Saved?

By: C.M. Ward

I think we spend too much time trying to make people understand the Gospel. It is my business to proclaim it rather than to explain it.

I must bring you to Jesus-not to some doctrine. Suddenly you are aware of His presence. You touch Him. That is salvation.

I thank God for the Atonement. It is the message of the New Testament. But first you must meet Him! Paul puts it plainly, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Meet Him first, and faith will encompass these doctrines.

Paul's testimony was this: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1: 12).

Not once did Paul ever say he was "persuaded" about Jesus. I do not think any amount of brilliant, human persuasion could have changed Paul. It required a personal meeting. Once that took place, Paul was easily "persuaded" that Jesus was completely capable of saving him. Nothing happens until you know Him.

The New Testament cannot possibly lead you astray. John 3:16 says, "That whosoever believeth in him". . . . John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him." In a later chapter the disciple says, "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

Remember this! Men rejected Him not on the grounds of what He did, but of who He was.

So, first of all, you are invited to believe in what He is and who He is. Then you will be persuaded about what He has done and is doing.

I remind you that John 3:16 does not say: "Whosoever believes that Christ died for him and bore his sins on the cross has everlasting life." That is true and fundamental. But the verse simply says, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So I ask you, "Do you know Jesus? Who is He?" He is the Son of God. God released Him to the human race. It is my personal relationship with Him that counts. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36).

The first step is your initial contact with the Lord. Unless you meet Jesus, nothing is going to happen. Head knowledge and theological analysis will not do it. You do not have to understand the plan of salvation. The first requirement

for salvation is not knowledge, but meeting Christ.

My nature is to want everything accomplished by an accepted and approved formula. But I have come to see that all that is needed for the initial step is that there should be a personal contact with God.

We do not need to study the plan of electricity and understand it before we can contact the light. The light does not say, "I am not going to shine for you, for you know nothing of the principle on which I work."

And God does not set understanding as a condition of our approach to Him. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). There you have it!

How much did the dying thief understand? Certainly not much! He could not have passed the most simple of doctrinal exams. What happened? He recognized Jesus Christ. He received Him. Here is his conversation. "He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

What did the Lord reply? He did not remind him of his evil life or a just penalty. He did not say, "You deserve to die, but I am dying in your place." All that was true but there was no time to study the plan of salvation. The Lord answered, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

It is the association that counts. The important thing was that he recognized who Jesus was. He "believed on him." He said publicly, "You are suffering unjustly. You are dying. But You will reign and have a kingdom, and I want to be in it through Your grace to me." That was enough.

How much did the publican in the temple understand? The Pharisee had the knowledge. He had been trained to understand the significance of the offerings, sacrifices and tithes. He was a doctrinal expert. But there was no cry of the heart to God. God could as well have been a paper god as far as he was concerned. It was a science with him.

But the publican cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). He knew someone mighty and forgiving was near. He placed his entire self upon that Person. He touched God and was justified. That is what it takes to be righteous.

Look at the New Testament! The Epistle to the Romans tells in detail about sin and salvation, and from a study of it we can learn a great deal about the doctrine of redemption. Yet it was written for Christians.

John's Gospel, on the other hand, gives no doctrine in any systematic form. Yet it was written for the world. So many times we would arrange things the other way.

In case of fire you allow yourself to be saved, and afterwards you can inquire about the length of the ladder, the uniforms the firemen wore, the route the truck took to get to you, and other details.

You can know so much and never feel your need of God.

I want you to meet the Son of God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Declare Him to be the son of God! Express your confidence in Him. Link yourself to Him. Immediately you will experience His saving work.

Remember this! A dead Christ cannot save you. You need more than a memory. You need a Presence. It is the living Lord who becomes our Savior.

Jesus is no longer the crucified but the reigning One. Salvation comes to you and me from the throne. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Do you recognize Him as Lord?

Redemption was secured by Jesus on the cross nearly two thousand years ago. My salvation today rests upon that redemption which was accomplished once for all. I am personally saved when I rest my all on that eternal fact. By a voluntary act of my free will I partake of that fact. That is faith, belief!

My salvation depends upon recognition. I declare Him to be Lord. I tie my plea for clemency and resuscitation to His resurrection. A living Lord means that His death for me was accepted of God.

Your salvation depends upon you personal contact with this same Lord Jesus Christ.

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