

Believing on "the Lord Jesus Christ" vs "Accepting Jesus as your Personal Saviour"

Before I get into the Biblical details and implications concerning this issue. I just want to start off by saying the following:

1. I don't think that everyone who has received Jesus as their personal Saviour is lost. (However, I do think that there are many who have prayed the prayer and are trusting their prayer and their confession and are still lost.).
2. I will bring a little bit of personal testimony into this, however, I want us to examine the scriptures which are unchanging.
3. Please just consider the things I bring forth, and then search the scriptures to see whether these things are so.

I was raised under the personal Savior confession unto salvation. I preached the personal Saviour confession unto salvation. However, this confession was never able to give me the peace and assurance in my heart of heaven for 100% certainty that it was supposed to give.

As I continued in the scriptures through my 20's, somewhere in my mid-twenties I began realizing that the way Jesus and the apostles (including Paul) preached salvation was quite different than the way it has been preached in the 20th and 21st centuries. At first, I was afraid that these things I was coming to see would make me a heretic. However, the still small voice of the Spirit of God encouraged me to just keep reading, which is what I did. The amazing thing was that everything that the Lord began to show me from his scriptures, he would then confirm both in other scriptures and through another preacher or brother in the Lord (that in the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses, let every word be established). It truly was amazing how many times within 1 week after he would show me something significantly new, I would hear someone else proclaim the exact same thing that I never heard before with boldness! The more time went on, the stronger my faith and understanding grew in God's word as revealed in the scriptures, and the more my fear of what men would think of me diminished. I stand here now today with absolute conviction that salvation is a result of God drawing a sinner to himself through Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. I believe that salvation is given to those who come to believe with all their heart in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and as the Lord. I don't believe it is about just accepting part of Jesus to get something from Jesus. However, I believe those who repent and turn to the living God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ completely for who he is, what he stands for (teaches/declares), what he has done, and what he will do are given the gift of the Holy Ghost to manifest the fact that they have been put into Christ and have been reconciled to the Father. I could go on and on about all the things that happen to us at conversion, but that is not for now.

I do not believe that this is an issue of semantics either. We as Bible believers understand that the words themselves matter, as the words carry meaning. We also want to be true to what is in the scriptures both in word and meaning.

So let me just give a few reasons why I preach Jesus Christ the Lord as opposed to personal Saviour for the confession unto salvation.

1. The confession throughout the New Testament that Paul preached is Jesus Christ as Lord.
 1. Acts 20:21 "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
 2. Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."
 3. Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus..."
 4. 1 Corinthians 12:3 "and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."
 5. Philippians 2:11 "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."

If we never heard the concept of accepting Jesus as our personal Saviour, and we just had our King James Bible and we read and studied it for the doctrines that we should believe, we would never come to the conclusion that the confession unto salvation is accepting Jesus as your personal Saviour. We would most definitely come to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. It's all through the New Testament with nothing of the other one.

2. The numbers don't lie:
 1. "Lord" found 681x in the New Testament
 2. "Jesus" found 977x in the New Testament
 3. "Christ" found 571x in the New Testament
 4. "Saviour" found only 23x in the New Testament
 1. Only 15 of these refer to Jesus as the Saviour while the other 8 refer to the Father, and none of them ever imply making the confession of Jesus as a personal Saviour unto salvation.
 2. If this was the key confession that one must come to, certainly it would be more clearly spelled out in the New Testament. But it is not, because it is not. The "Lord", "Jesus", and "Christ" are the predominant names/titles by far throughout the New Testament for a distinct reason.
 3. Is Jesus the Saviour? Certainly. But evidently this is not the primary faith/confession that one had to come to in order to be saved.

3. The faith that the church is built on.

According to Jesus Christ, his church is built on the truth of the fact that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is also the entire reason why John wrote his gospel (so that people would come to that faith), and that is what Philip demanded the Ethiopian Eunuch to believe with ALL his heart before he was baptized.

Now the key question is, what does it mean to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? What was Peter thinking as a Jewish man when he made that confession in Matthew 16? I don't believe that he was thinking personal Saviour. And we know he had no concept of the death, burial, and resurrection (in fact, his confession of Jesus as the Christ made it hard for him to reconcile the concept of the Christ dying). I would argue that he was thinking Psalm 2! That is the clearest text in the OT regarding the Christ "the

anointed". It clearly reveals that "the Christ" would be the very "Son of God" himself. And that this Son of God would be the one anointed of the Father to rule the entire earth as absolute king with a rod of iron. He would be the one that would prevail over all enemies and would not be defeated. He would be the one that the very judges and kings of the earth would have to approach trembling and kiss him with fear lest his anger be kindled against them. This is what Peter was confessing! And Jesus did not rebuke him for this confession but rather blessed him as getting what the Father wanted to reveal to him. To believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is to believe that he is the anointed One of the Father to rule heaven and earth and prevail over all. His kingdom will rule and he cannot be stopped. He is judge of all! And that is exactly what the apostles were sent forth to preach. That is why Peter quoted Psalm 2 when he preached in Acts 2. Paul also quoted Psalm 2 when he preached in Acts 13 (and also in the book of Hebrews). And Peter said they were commanded to preach that Christ (who is Lord of all) was Judge of quick and dead in Acts 10 when the gospel first went to the Gentiles. Paul also confirmed Christ's ordination of judging when he preached in Athens in Acts 17. So Christ was very much presented as the conquering King with all power in heaven and earth both BEFORE the cross and AFTER the resurrection. The only thing that changed, was their understanding that the Christ had to FIRST suffer and THEN enter into his glory (for which they were upbraided). But the understanding of the Christ being the conquering King and that message never changed. It's just that it grew into fuller understanding of how the Christ became the sacrifice to destroy sin and the works of the devil that we might finally have a new heart and new spirit in him and become partakers of the promise of the Holy Ghost which is the token of our glorification with CHRIST! (And then of course the fact that Christ was also anointed to be a High Priest over a new and better covenant after the order of Melchizedec (who also was promised to strike through kings in the day of his wrath)). So, sometimes in the modern gospel people are only presented with the suffering Saviour, and not presented with the conquering Lord. I don't think these 2 are to be separated. Nor do I think they can. People are offered to take a Saviour but not a Lord. Many times people think they can get Saviour, and then later (if they want) they can take Lord... but that is optional. I don't believe that was EVER preached in the NT. Not by Jesus, nor by any of the apostles including Paul. He was preached as Lord. And those who confessed and believed him as Lord, also get him as Saviour. But those who reject him as Lord, get neither.

Anyway, I could go on and on, but I will not. Please consider these things and feel free to respond with any thoughts or comments. I hope these things make sense.

Also, just to clarify, that scripture you quoted in John 1 does not say that those who accept him as Saviour receive the power to become the sons of God. It says that those who receive HIM. Not receive him as Saviour. There is a difference between accepting part of Jesus for what you want from him, versus receiving HIM. Period. Either you receive him, or you don't. You can't take part and leave part. In fact, in that context, it's not talking about him as Saviour. It's talking about him as the eternal Word of God (who is the creator of all things), it's talking about him as the true Light that is eternal life; it's talking about the Word made flesh who came to reveal the Father; it's talking about the Son of God who was sent to declare the Father, etc.... John does not reveal Jesus as a personal Saviour.

He reveals Jesus throughout the gospel as the CHRIST, the Son of God, who is EVERYTHING! (The bread of life, the light of the world, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, etc....). And we know that he wasn't trying to get people to accept him as a personal Saviour but was rather trying to get people to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing people might have life through his name! Just some additional thoughts.

The last thing though that I wanted to clarify was this: I don't think that all who received Jesus as their personal Saviour are lost. Here's why. There are many like my parents who were raised in Roman Catholicism and had the prior understanding of who Jesus was: the Christ, the Son of God, the Creator, the 2nd part of the Trinity, God in the flesh, the Judge of heaven and earth, etc.... But what they lacked was the understanding that he died on the cross for ALL their sins and that he could save them personally. They thought there was some church salvation thing and didn't understand that Jesus saves 1 person at a time. And so, the personal Saviour concept, was kind of like the last piece of the puzzle and it brought people to Christ in a real and personal way.

However, the danger is those who are raised with the personal Saviour confession (which again is not the confession of the New Testament) who don't have that understanding of who Jesus is as the Christ. I can't tell you how many people think they are saved because of the prayer they prayed when they were 6 because they heard that Jesus died for their sins and asked him to save them but they have no idea who Jesus really is, what he stands for, what he represents, what he teaches, etc.... And they don't even know what it means that he is the Christ. So they think they are saved because of their confession and prayer, but meanwhile they don't know Jesus, or the Father, and there is no manifestation of the Spirit in their life (because they have never received the Holy Ghost). That is the danger that I am seeing firsthand everywhere I go. And so that is why I preach Jesus Christ in as much of his fulness as I can present and those who believe in him, he gives them his Spirit and they become the sons of the living God. And those who don't believe in him (for who he is and what he has and will do) don't receive his Spirit. They may still go to church and learn how to be consistent in those things, but they don't know him; and thus, they ultimately love the world and the things of it because they don't know the Father and the Son (which is life eternal according to Jesus himself).