

REPENTANCE

1. Terms.

- a. נחם: “to regret...to become remorseful...to be sorry, come to regret something” (*HALOT*, 688).
 - a. Ex 13:7; 32:14; 1 Sa 15:29 (LXX μετανοέω); Jer 4:28; Eze 24:14; Joel 2:14; Jon 3:10; Ps 110:4; 1 Ch 21:15
- b. שׁוּב: “to bring back, refresh, refute...to turn back, return...to turn around...to be restored again...to bring back...to lead back...to bring back, meaning to convert from evil...to restore...to be brought back, be carried back, be given back” (*HALOT*, 1427-34).
- c. μετανοέω: “change one’s mind...feel remorse, repent, be converted (in a variety of relationships and in connection w. varied responsibilities, moral, political, social or religious)” (*BDAG*, 640).
 - (1) Etymologically, μετάνοια is a combination of μετά (“after, behind”)¹ and νοῦς (“mind, intellect, understanding; attitude, way of thinking; mind, thought, opinion”).²
 - (2) νοῦς: “the faculty of intellectual perception...*mind, intellect* as the side of life contrasted w. physical existence, the higher, mental part of a human being that initiates thoughts and plans...*understanding, mind* as faculty of thinking...way of thinking, *mind, attitude*, as the sum total of the whole mental and moral state of being...result of thinking, mind, thought, opinion, decree” (*BDAG*, 680).
 - (3) νοέω: “to grasp or comprehend someth. on the basis of careful thought, *perceive, apprehend, understand, gain an insight into*...to think over with care, *consider, take note of*...to form an idea about something, *think, imagine*...to pay heed with intent to act appropriately, *be minded*” (*BDAG*, 674-75).
- d. ἐπιστρέφω: “to return to a point where one has been, *turn around, go back*...to change direction, *turn around*, aor. pass. in act. sense...to cause a pers. to change belief or course of conduct, with focus on the thing to which one turns, *turn*..., in a spiritual or moral sense...to change one’s mind or course of action, for better or worse, *turn, return*” (*BDAG*, 382).
- e. μεταμέλομαι: “to have regrets about someth., in the sense that one wishes it could be undone, *be very sorry, regret*...to change one’s mind about someth., without focus on regret, *change one’s mind, have second thoughts*” (*BDAG*, 639).
- f. ἀποστρέφω: “gener. to turn someth. away from someth., *turn away*...to cause change in belief or behavior...positive *turn, turn away*” (*BDAG*, 122-23).
- g. λυπέω: “to cause severe mental or emotional distress, *vex, irritate, offend, insult*...to experience sadness or distress...*become sad, sorrowful, distressed*...*be sad, be distressed, grieve*...to experience sadness as the result of some condition or circumstance, *be sad, grieve, mourn*...to engage in mourning for one who is dead, ordinarily w. traditional rites, *mourn over*” (*BDAG*, 795).
- h. The English term “repentance” derives from the Latin term [], meaning “[.]”

¹ *BDAG*, 637.

² *BDAG*, 680.

2. Concept.

- a. μετάνοια is a change in one's attitude, beliefs, mindset, thinking, or worldview.
 - a. **Ro 2:4** 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of his kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you into (εις) a change of mindset (μετάνοια)?
 - b. **2 Ti 2:24-26** 24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are opposed, if perhaps God may give to them a change of mindset (μετάνοια) into recognition of the truth (εις ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας), 26 and they may come to their senses again (ἀνανήφω) from the devil's trap (παγίδος), having been captured alive by him into his desire.
 - c. **Re 2:14-16** 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching (διδασχῆ) of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching (διδασχῆ) of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore change your way of thinking (μετανοέω), or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.
- b. The content of one's beliefs is always at issue. There is always a pre-μετάνοια content of belief and a post-μετάνοια content of belief. The point of μετάνοια is the point of change in one's beliefs.
- c. The domain of μετάνοια is the mind, not behavior, emotion, or speech.
 - (1) This quote, typical of many theologians, is erroneous.
 - (a) "True repentance possesses three essential aspects. (1) An *intellectual* element. The repentant soul must understand God's holiness, righteousness, and displeasure against sin (Deut 25:16; 1 Kgs 14:22; Luke 16:15); must be aware of personal sin and guilt (Isa 6:5; Luke 18:13; Rom 3:20); and must be persuaded of God's readiness to forgive (Matt 6:14; Eph 4:32). (2) An *emotional* element, in which the penitent abhors sin (Ps 119:104; Ezek 20:43) and experiences godly sorrow and remorse, not for the pain it has caused himself, but for the grief it has caused God and others (Joel 2:12-13; Ps 51:4; 2 Cor 7:10). This aspect of repentance appears in the verb *nāham*, to "be sorry," "regret," "repent"—where the root idea means to breathe deeply. After gaining a fuller knowledge of God and a clearer perspective on himself, Job exclaimed, 'I despise myself and repent (Niphal of *nāham*) in dust and ashes' (Job 42:6; cf. Jer. 31:19). (3) A *volitional* element, which involves determination to forsake sins and amend one's life."³
 - (2) μετάνοια may or may not be accompanied by an emotional element.
 - (a) Emotions may or may not precede or follow. At times it is natural and normal for emotions to accompany μετάνοια. But these emotions are not the μετάνοια. The μετάνοια remains what it is—a change in one's thinking.
 - 1) **2 Co 7:8-10** 8 ...Even if I [Paul] made you grieve (λυπέω, aor.) with my letter, I do not regret (μεταμέλομαι, pres.) it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I

³ Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 254.

rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into a change of mind (μετάνοια). For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a change of mind (μετάνοια) that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

- 2) **Heb 12:17** 17 ... You know that afterward, when [Esau] desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to change his mind (μετάνοια), though he sought it with tears.
- 3) “Probably most people think of ‘feeling sorry’ or ‘feeling guilty’ when they hear the term repentance. However, ...being sorry is not a synonym for repenting. While sorrow often accompanies repentance and even promotes repentance, 2 Cor. 7:9-10 and Heb. 12:17 show that sorrow is not the same as repentance.”⁴
 - (b) This is why justification is not by emotion but by faith. Strong emotions do not indicate whether one has believed the gospel message.
 - (c) If the biblical authors desired to stress the emotional aspect of turning from sin, μετάνοια is not the most appropriate Greek term.
- (3) μετάνοια may or may not be accompanied by a volitional element.
 - (a) At times an inner determination or resolve may accompany a μετάνοια. But again, this inner resolve is not itself μετάνοια. It is natural and normal for inner determination to follow a change of mind. μετάνοια remains what it is—a change of mind.
 - (b) Strong inner resolve does not indicate whether one has believed the gospel message. Just like emotions, a person’s willpower is fickle, as anyone who has ever made a new year’s resolution will attest.
 - (c) This is why justification is by faith in the person and work of Jesus, not by willpower. Our willpower is fickle; Jesus is not. Just ask Peter and the apostles.
- (4) μετάνοια may or may not be accompanied by a behavioural element.
 - (a) **Acts 26:17-20** 17 ... Delivering you [Paul] from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn (ἐπιστρέφω) from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith (πίστις) in me. 19 Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should change their minds (μετανοέω, pres.) and turn (ἐπιστρέφω, pres.) to God, performing deeds in keeping with their change of mind (μετάνοια).
 - (b) **Re 2:4-5** 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.) and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.).

⁴ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 15-16.

- (c) “The New Testament call to repentance...is a call to a change of mind which promotes a change in the course being pursued.”⁵
- d. What leads to μετάνοια or proceeds from μετάνοια is not μετάνοια itself.
 - (1) Theologians often make this mistake.
 - (a) “The Reformational distinctive of *sola fides* does not exclude the godly sorrow for sin and the turning therefrom that constitutes biblical repentance.”⁶
 - (2) The word πίστις is similar. What often leads to faith in Jesus and what often derives from faith in Jesus is not faith in Jesus itself.
 - (3) Emotion, will, and behaviour may often cluster around μετάνοια, but none of them are μετάνοια. μετάνοια deals precisely with one thing—one’s way of thinking, system of beliefs, or worldview.
 - e. Given the confusion around the term repentance, it is recommended not to use the term. It is “Christianese” anyway. Just say “change one’s thinking.”
 - (1) “As long as it is properly defined to be compatible with *sola fide* (faith alone), repentance is a legitimate term to express the condition for salvation.”⁷

3. Subject.

- a. Individual [].
 - (1) Any individual unbeliever.
 - (a) **Lk 5:31-32** 31 ...Jesus answered [the Pharisees and scribes], Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to a change of mind (μετάνοια).
 - (b) **Lk 15:7** 7 ...I [Jesus] tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes his mind (μετανοέω, pres.) than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no change of mind (μετάνοια).
 - (c) **Ac 26:17-20** 17 ...Delivering you [Paul] from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn (ἐπιστρέφω) from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith (πίστις) in me. 19 Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should change their minds (μετανοέω, pres.) and turn (ἐπιστρέφω, pres.) to God, performing deeds in keeping with their change of mind (μετάνοια).
 - (d) **2 Pe 3:9** 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach a change of mind (μετάνοια).
 - (2) Any Jewish unbeliever.
 - (a) **Ac 2:37-39** 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? 38 And Peter said to them, Change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.) and be baptised every one

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 372.

⁶ Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 265.

⁷ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 16.

of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God [specially] calls to himself.

- (b) **Ac 3:17-20** 17 ...Now, brothers, I [Peter] know that you acted in ignorance (ἄγνοια), as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.) therefore and turn back (ἐπιστρέφω, aor.), that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you....
- (3) Any Gentile unbeliever.
- (a) **Lk 24:46-47** 46 ...Thus it is written that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that a change of mind (μετάνοια) for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
- (b) **Ac 11:17-18** 17 If then God gave the same gift to [Cornelius and his household] as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Messiah, who was I that I could stand in God's way? 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has granted a change of mind (μετάνοια) that leads to life.
- (c) **1 Th 1:9** 9 ... They themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned (ἐπιστρέφω, aor.) to God from idols to serve the living and true God....
- (4) All believers.
- (a) μετάνοια is for believers, too. Unbelievers must undergo a basic μετάνοια when they believe in Jesus. Believers are to undergo a continual, advanced μετάνοια.
- (b) **Ro 12:2** 2 ...Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....
- (c) **Eph 4:17-23** 17 ...Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. 19 And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Messiah in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard him and have been taught in him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind....
- (d) **2 Pe 1:2-3** 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 seeing that his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence.
- (5) Believer out of fellowship with God.
- (a) **Lk 17:3-4** 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he changes his mind (μετανοέω, aor.), forgive him. 4 And if he sins against

you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times saying, I repent (μετανοέω, pres.), you must forgive him.

- (b) **Ac 8:22-23** 22 Change your mind, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you [Simon the magician]. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.
 - (c) **2 Co 12:21** 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not changed their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) about the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.
- b. Corporate μετάνοια.
- (1) Israel.
 - (a) **Ne 1:8-9** 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them....
 - (b) **Mt 4:17** 17 From that time Jesus began to preach saying, Change your minds (μετανοέω, pres.), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - (c) **Mt 11:20-22** 20 Then [Jesus] began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.). 21 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.
 - (d) **Mk 6:12** 12 So [the twelve] went out and proclaimed that people should change their minds (μετανοέω, pres.).
 - (e) **Ac 5:31** 31 God exalted [Jesus] at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give a change of mind (μετάνοια) to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
 - (2) A Gentile nation.
 - (a) **Mt 12:41** 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they changed their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.
 - (3) Local church.
 - (a) **Re 2:4-5** 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.) and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.).
 - (b) **Re 2:14-16** 14 But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam.... 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.). If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.
 - (c) **Re 2:20-22** 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my

servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to change her mind (μετανοέω, aor.), but she refuses to change her mind (μετανοέω, aor.) of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) of her works....

- (d) **Re 3:1-3** 1 I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it and change your minds (μετανοέω). If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.
- (e) **Re 3:19** 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and change your minds (μετανοέω, aor.).

4. Pre-Object.

a. Situation-dependent.

- (1) “The object from which a person must repent is not the same in every passage. People in different false religions and false philosophies with different backgrounds and ideas need to change their minds, i.e., repent, about different misconceptions. Repentance about God is probably involved in every conversion. Yet, the specific ideas about which a sinner repents would be quite diverse. All must believe in Christ to be saved, but the misconceptions and hindrances that must be changed in order to believe are extremely diverse. An unsaved person has to change the mind (repent) about anything that stands in the way of his coming to faith in Christ.”⁸

b. Phase one.

- (1) The content of belief one must adhere to in order to be justified is summed up in a few passages. A person must go from not believing these things to believing them. This is the essence of μετάνοια. Often the content of the unbeliever’s false beliefs is unspecified.⁹ This is because whatever those false beliefs may be, the stress of the gospel is positive. The positive invitation to the unbeliever is for him to come and believe the good news.
- (2) Idolatry.
- (a) **1 Th 1:9** 9 ...They themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned (ἐπιστρέφω, aor.) to God from idols to serve the living and true God....
- (3) Dead works.
- (a) **Heb 6:1-6** 1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of a change of mind (μετάνοια) from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

⁸ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 16-17.

⁹ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 17.

- (4) Works, demonolatry, idolatry, and sin.
- (a) **Re 9:20-21** 20 The rest of humanity, who were not killed by these plagues, did not change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see, hear, or walk, 21 nor did they change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.
- (b) **Re 16:10-11** 10 People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) about their deeds.
- c. Bad quote.
- (1) “Conversion... is a single act that has two distinct but inseparable aspects. *Repentance*, the forsaking of sin and the cultivating of a new hope, and *faith*, turning to Christ in belief and trust, are related to one another as two sides of a coin. The two are *interdependent* responses, each incomplete without the other. Thus conversion involves both a believing repentance and a penitent faith. True repentance requires belief, and full-orbed faith requires a repentant spirit. It is psychologically impossible to believe in the biblical sense without a broken, penitent spirit that renounces sin. Likewise, it is equally impossible to repent properly without assent to the imperatives of God’s word. ... We may isolate the two for purposes of discussion. For example, we may say that repentance is chiefly conversion in its backward glance (turning from sin), whereas faith is primarily conversion in its forward glance (turning to God). In reality, however, repentance and faith are two aspects of the unified experience of conversion. Thus it is unwise to assert the priority of one over the other chronologically or logically.”¹⁰
- d. One’s pre-[] object of faith is not personal sins. It is the worldview or idolatry that condones sin.
- e. Repentance is not a promise to stop sinning. It is a recognition: (1) one is a sinner; (2) one’s life is filled with personal sins; and (3) one’s personal sins have violate God’s righteousness. He must come to understand that, if there was no substitutionary sacrifice, he would be guilty before the holy, righteous God.
- f. If μετάνοια included changing one’s behavior, salvation would not be by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. Justification would be achieved by changing one’s behavior. This is the essence of works righteousness. This is exactly what the gospel is not.
- g. μετάνοια is also not a promise to turn from one’s personal sins or one’s sinful lifestyle. First of all, an unbeliever has no capacity to make such a promise. In addition, such a promise is never kept, unless one wishes to defend the doctrine of sinless perfection.
- (1) **1 Jn 1:8-10** 8 If we (believers) say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

¹⁰ Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 263-65.

- h. A key doctrine both of these ideas ignore is the doctrine of unlimited atonement, which concludes that Jesus on the cross paid the penalty for all the sins of all mankind, including all past, present and future sins of every believer. It makes little sense to require an unbeliever to stop sinning or to promise to stop sinning when the message of the gospel is that all the unbeliever's personal sins, including future ones he has yet to commit, have been paid for. Thus the idea that an unbeliever must stop sinning or promise to stop sinning is completely out of place. What the unbeliever must come to realize is that: (1) he is a sinner who commits personal sins; (2) these personal sins make him guilty before God; and (3) if God had not provided a substitute, his very own Son, God would be justified in sentencing him to the lake of fire for all eternity. It is this "coming to realize" these truths, and others, that is described by the term *μετάνοια*. The gospel message centres on the person and work of Jesus, not the unbeliever's personal sins, which have already been paid for. Thus, the only issue for the unbeliever is faith in Jesus, which of necessity includes a change of belief, described by the term *μετάνοια*. Those who do not receive the gospel message through a change of thinking (*μετάνοια*) are unbelievers who will be condemned to the lake of fire for all eternity.

5. Post-Object.

- a. See *Jesus Alone*.
- (1) **Jn 20:31** 31 ...These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.
- (2) **Jn 8:24** 24 ...Unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins.
- (3) **1 Co 15:1-8** 1 ...I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also.
- (4) **Jn 16:8-11** 8 [The Holy Spirit], when he comes, will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.
- b. See the *Apostles' Creed*.
- c. See the *Gospel Diagram*.
- d. Judgment and Jesus' Resurrection.
- (1) **Ac 17:30-32** 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to change their minds (*μετανοέω*, pres.), 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.
- e. God's glory.

- (1) **Re 16:9** 9 They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not change their minds (μετανοέω, aor.) and give him glory.

6. Repentance and Faith.

- a. In salvation contexts, repentance is a component of faith, not an additional requirement.
- (1) **Mt 21:28-32** 28 What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, Son, go and work in the vineyard today. 29 And he answered, I will not, but afterward he changed his mind (μεταμέλομαι, aor.) and went. 30 And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, I go, sir, but did not go. 31 Which of the two did the desire of his father? They said, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds (μεταμέλομαι, aor.) and believe him.
- (2) **Mk 1:14-15** 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God 15 and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent (μετανοέω, pres.) and believe (πιστεύω, pres.) in the gospel (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ).
- (3) **Lk 13:1-5** 1 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And he answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? 3 No, I tell you. But unless you change your minds (μετανοέω, pres.), you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you. but unless you change your minds (μετανοέω, pres.), you will all likewise perish.
- (4) **Lk 24:46-47** 46 ... Thus it is written that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that a change of mind (μετάνοια) for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
- (5) **Ac 11:17-18** 17 If then God gave the same gift to [Cornelius and his household] as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Messiah, who was I that I could stand in God's way? 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has granted a change of mind (μετάνοια) that leads to life.
- (6) **Ac 17:30-34** 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to change their minds (μετανοέω, pres.), 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, We will hear you again about this. 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also

were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- (7) **Ac 19:4-5** 4 ...Paul said, John baptised with the baptism of a change of mind (μετάνοια), telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. 5 On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - (8) **Ac 20:20-21** 20 ...I [Paul] did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of a change of mind (μετάνοια) toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Messiah.
 - (9) **Heb 6:1-2** 1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of a change of mind (μετάνοια) from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
 - (10) **2 Pe 3:9** 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach a change of mind (μετάνοια).
- b. John's gospel never uses the term μετάνοια.
- (1) "The Gospel by John..., the Epistle to the Romans with its exhaustive treatment of the theme in question, the Apostle Paul, and the whole array of 150 New Testament passages which are the total of the divine instruction, are incomplete and misleading if repentance must be accorded a place separate from, and independent of, believing."¹¹
- c. Believing in Jesus always involves a change of mindset.
- (1) "Repentance" is always required for one to believe in Jesus. That a change of mindset is always involved in belief is so obvious, that the word repentance is not absolutely necessary in a gospel presentation. But it may help to clarify what belief means.
- d. Great quotes.
- (1) "[R]epentance is essential to salvation and that none could be saved apart from repentance, but it is included in believing and could not be separated from it."¹²
 - (2) "[R]epentance, which is a change of mind, is included in believing. No individual can turn to Christ from some other confidence without a change of mind, and that, it should be noted, is all the repentance a spiritually dead individual can ever effect."¹³
 - (3) "[T]urning to Christ from all other confidences is one act, and in that one act repentance, which is a change of mind, is included."¹⁴
 - (4) "Upwards of 115 New Testament passages condition salvation on *believing*, and fully 35 passages condition salvation on *faith*, which latter word in this use of it is an exact synonym of the former. These portions of Scripture, totaling about 150 in

¹¹ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:376.

¹² Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:373.

¹³ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:374.

¹⁴ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:374.

all, include practically all that the New Testament declares on the matter of the human responsibility in salvation; yet each one of these texts omits any reference to repentance as a separate act.”¹⁵

(5) “[R]epentance, which is a change of mind, enters of necessity into the very act of believing on Christ, since one cannot turn to Christ from other objects of confidence without that change of mind. Upwards of 150 texts—including all of the greatest gospel invitations—limit the human responsibility in salvation to believing or to faith. To this simple requirement nothing could be added if the glories of grace are to be preserved.”¹⁶

(6) “It is true that repentance can very well be required as a condition of salvation, but then only because the change of mind which it is has been involved when turning from every other confidence to the one needful trust in Christ. Such turning about, of course, cannot be achieved without a change of mind. This vital newness of mind is a part of believing, after all, and therefore it may be and is used as a synonym for believing....”¹⁷

7. Turning.

- a. **Ac 3:19** 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord....
- b. **Ac 26:20** 20 ...But declaring both to those of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.
- c. **1 Th 1:9** 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God....

8. Application.

- a. Be careful about adding “repentance from sin” to faith in Jesus.
- b. Repentance is not renunciation of sin.

¹⁵ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:376.

¹⁶ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:378.

¹⁷ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:265.

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Notes

Repentance involves three essential elements: “a turning to God; a turning from evil; and the intent to serve God. No change of mind can be called true repentance without including all three elements.”¹⁸

“No evangelism that omits the message of repentance can properly be called the gospel, for sinners cannot come to Jesus Christ apart from a radical change of heart, mind, and will.”¹⁹

Faith is implicit in repentance, and repentance in faith within the unity of the act of conversion.

It is impossible to sever repentance from the faith that saves.

“...[R]epentance and faith are so linked together that they can not be separated.”²⁰

“Repentance involves turning from the old way of life and renouncing every known sin. It involves the decision to relinquish all our idols, false loves, and splendid vices in order to come to Christ. For conversion to be genuine the penitent must, *as far as he or she can determine*, turn from all ungodly loyalties.”

“...[T]here is a repentance that needs to be repented of.”²¹

“...[F]or conversion to be authentic and transforming, pre-Christians must make the Lord Jesus Christ the object of their exclusive loyalty. This means that *to the best of their knowledge* penitents will forsake all known vice and cling to the Savior as their only hope of salvation. Genuine conversion thus will involve sincere repentance, total commitment to Christ, and submission to the Lord’s sovereign rule.”

“Next to sound doctrine itself, no more important obligation rests on the preacher than that of preaching the Lordship of Christ to Christians exclusively; and the Saviorhood of Christ to those who are unsaved.”²²

Repentance is strictly a change in one’s belief system.

Repentance does not involve being sorry for sin, turning from sin, or altering one’s behavior.

Repenting of sin means changing one’s outlook on sin, in the sense of recognising that sin is a heinous problem that only God can resolve.

¹⁸ John MacArthur.

¹⁹ John MacArthur.

²⁰ John Calvin.

²¹ Charles Spurgeon.

²² Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:387.

“Repentance means a change of mind or attitude. It does not include tears or turning. It doesn’t even necessarily deal with sin.”²³

The object from which a person must repent is not the same in every passage.

People in different false religions and false philosophies with different backgrounds and ideas need to change their minds about different misconceptions.

Repentance about God is probably involved in every conversion.

A change of mind would be different for a Satan worshipper, an atheist, or an orthodox Jew. All must believe in Christ to be saved, but the misconceptions and hindrances that must be changed in order to believe are extremely diverse.

“While some degree of repentance is involved in every conversion, the specific ideas or action about which a person must change his mind varies from person to person. An unsaved person has to change the mind (repent) about anything that stands in the way of his coming to faith in Christ. For some this will be a change about a philosophy, e.g., idol worship. For others this is a change of mind about sin, e.g., refusing to trust in Christ because they know He will command them to break off an immoral affair. The object of repentance is probably not the same in any two individuals. A person must repent about whatever it is that keeps him or her from faith in Christ.”²⁴

“The fact that an evangelist does not know the precise falsehood of which a potential convert must repent should not be upsetting or confusing. Since the only condition for salvation is faith, it stands to reason that if faith is placed in Christ; then repentance has already occurred. When a person honestly and seriously entrusts his or her soul’s eternal destiny to Christ, then that person has also changed his mind about whatever it was that had been a barrier to coming to Christ. Faith and repentance are not two separate conditions for salvation. Repentance is a particular aspect of saving faith. By trusting in Christ, the person has changed his mind, i.e., repented, about whatever kept him from accepting the Savior. The act of faith contains within it all the repenting that needs to be done to secure salvation. . . .By turning in faith to Jesus Christ, the soul has already fulfilled all the ‘change in thinking’ and ‘turning away from’ that is required for salvation. . . .The responsibility of the evangelist is to teach that the person must trust in Christ (and obviously this implies he or she must change their mind about anything that hinders faith in Christ). It is not the business of the evangelist to determine the specific ideas or sins that pose the barrier or for him to make a list of items from which a person must turn. If there is a ‘turning to’ Christ, then the specific ‘turning away from’ will take care of itself.”²⁵

²³ G. Michael Cocoris.

²⁴ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 21-24.

²⁵ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 24-25.

“There must be caution or the term *repentance* will be misused to create a salvation based upon works. We dare not tell a potential convert that there must be a turning away from sins A, B, and C before there can be salvation. Salvation is based upon faith alone.”²⁶

“The Bible does not make the cessation of sin in general or of a specific sin, such as alcoholism, a prerequisite for salvation. This would not only be a works method for salvation, but it would be an impossible method for salvation. Asking a potential convert to overcome an addictive sin before conversion is asking him to obtain victory when he has absolutely no power to overcome sin. The command ‘to repent’ is not the same as a command ‘to cease’ all sin or any given sin before there can be salvation. Furthermore, the Bible never requires a person to promise to cease a particular sin in order to find salvation. Repentance should not be confused with a vow to stop or a promise to cease a particular sin that especially tempts an individual. Asking for a commitment to cease from a sin is asking for a commitment that cannot be made at a pre-conversion stage. There is no power in the life to make such an unrealistic promise. In fact, the appeal for a vow to stop sinning encourages the unsaved to have confidence in their own abilities, and that is the opposite of saving faith. A potential convert should be made to see that he has absolutely no ability to overcome sin and that he cannot in good faith even promise to forsake it. He is hopelessly dominated by sin. That is why he must believe in Christ. Salvation is based upon an empty hand that takes God’s blessing as a free gift.”²⁷

“[T]here is nothing in the term *repentance* that involves what is commonly called Lordship Salvation. Telling a person that he must cease from sinning or promise to cease from sinning before he can have salvation is putting an impossible obstacle in front of him and adding to the one condition for salvation. An unsaved person who has tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to break a sinful addiction does not have, nor does he understand, the power of Christ which comes after salvation. . . . The misunderstanding of repentance as the demand for a pre-conversion cessation from sin, or for a vow to cease sinning, creates an additional and heretical condition for salvation. In fact, it is best if an unbeliever feels utterly hopeless about overcoming slavery to sin. It is best if he realizes that he himself cannot forsake sin or promise to forsake sin and that he needs divine help. All God requires from a sinner is that he wants deliverance from sin badly enough to trust in Christ for it. . . . If a potential convert can trust in Christ, he has recognized Christ’s authority to a sufficient degree; he has made all the commitments he needs to make, he has desired all the deliverance from sin he needs to desire, and he has done all the repenting that needs to be done in order to have salvation.”²⁸

Since repentance—conceived of as a separate act—is almost universally added to believing as a requirement on the human side for salvation, a consideration of the Biblical meaning of repentance is essential.²⁹

²⁶ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 25.

²⁷ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 26-27

²⁸ Waterhouse, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, 27-28.

²⁹ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:372.

“The word means *a change of mind*. The common practice of reading into this word the thought of sorrow and heart-anguish is responsible for much confusion in the field of Soteriology. There is no reason why sorrow should not accompany repentance or lead on to repentance, but the sorrow, whatever it may be, is not repentance.”³⁰

“True repentance has a distinct and constant reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you repent of sin without looking to Christ, away with your repentance. If you are so lamenting your sin as to forget the Savior, you have a need to begin all this work over again. Whenever we repent of sin, we must have one eye upon sin and another upon the cross; or, better still, let us have both eyes upon Christ, seeing our sin punished in him, and by no means let us look at sin except as we look at Jesus. A man may hate sin just as a murderer hates the gallows but this does not prove repentance if I hate sin because of the punishment, I have not repented of sin; I merely regret that God is just. But if I can see sin as an offense against Jesus Christ, and loathe myself because I have wounded him, then I have a true brokenness of heart. If I see the Savior and believe that those thorns upon his head were put there by my sinful words; if I believe that those wounds in his heart were pierced by my heart-sins; if I believe that those wounds in his feet were made by my wandering steps, and that the wounds in his hands were made by my sinful deeds, then I repent after a right fashion. Only under the cross can you repent. Repentance elsewhere is remorse, which clings to the sin and only dreads the punishment. Let us then seek, under God, to have a hatred of sin caused by a site of Christ’s love.”³¹

“So the proconsul said: I have wild beasts; I will throw you to them, unless you change your mind (μετανοέω). But he said: Call for them! For the repentance (ἀμετάθετος) from better to worse is a change (μετάνοια) impossible for us; but it is a noble thing to change (μετατίθημι) from that which is evil to righteousness. Then he said to him again: I will have you consumed by fire, since you despise the wild beasts, unless you change your mind (μετανοέω). But Polycarp said: You threaten with a fire that burns only briefly and after just a little while is extinguished, for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Come, do what you wish.”³²

Jn 16:8-11 8 ...When [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“The thought expressed by ἐλέγχω is not at all of the creation of sorrow in the heart, but rather of an illumination or enlightenment respecting certain truths which the Lord was careful to enumerate; that is, the enlightenment will be along three lines—“sin, because they believe not on me”; “righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more”; and “judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” This ministry is one which is

³⁰ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:372.

³¹ Charles Spurgeon.

³² *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 11.1-2.

accomplished in the heart itself, by which the whole being responds to realities which had not been recognized before.”³³

The fruits of repentance, a change of behavior, is not the same as repentance, a change of mind.

“...[W]e can think of the kind of repenting that John the Baptist, Jesus, and later Jesus’ disciples, were calling on their hearers to demonstrate as involving consideration, conviction, and conversion. Repentance begins with consideration of the facts. Awareness of these facts brings conviction of personal need. Feeling these personal needs leads to conversion, or a turning from what is bad to what is good (cf. Peter’s sermon in Acts).”³⁴

“Changing your mind about Adam’s change of mind about God, you must get back to God by a deliberate act of faith, as Adam lost Him by a deliberate act of unbelief!”³⁵

Repentance has to do with our interior world.

“Of Repentance they teach that for those who have fallen after Baptism there is remission of sins whenever they are converted and that the Church ought to impart absolution to those thus returning to repentance. Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance.”³⁶

“We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation....”³⁷

“Then I read Chesterton’s *Everlasting Man* and for the first time saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to me to make sense. Somehow I contrived not to be too badly shaken. You will remember that I already thought Chesterton the most sensible man alive “apart from his Christianity.” Now, I veritably believe, I thought—I didn’t of course *say*; words would have revealed the nonsense—that Christianity itself was very sensible ‘apart from its Christianity.’ But I hardly remember, for I had not long finished *The Everlasting Man* when something far more alarming happened to me. Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good.

³³ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:218.

³⁴ T. Constable, “Notes on Matthew,” 17.

³⁵ W. Ian Thomas, *The Mystery of Godliness*, 119.

³⁶ Philipp Melancthon, *The Augsburg Confession*, Article XII.

³⁷ Dallas Theological Seminary, *Doctrinal Statement*, Article VII.

‘Rum thing,’ he went on. ‘All that stuff of Frazer’s about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once.’ To understand the shattering impact of it, you would need to know the man (who has certainly never since shown any interest in Christianity). If he, the cynic of cynics, the toughest of the toughs, were not—as I would still have put it—‘safe,’ where could I turn? Was there then no escape? The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense. I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suit of armour, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armour or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corslet meant the incalculable. The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, ‘I chose,’ yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think that this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, ‘I am what I do.’ Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back—drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling. The fox had been dislodged from Hegelian Wood and was now running in the open, ‘with all the wo in the world,’ bedraggled and weary, hounds barely a field behind. And nearly everyone was now (one way or another) in the pack; Plato, Dante, MacDonald, Herbert, Barfield, Tolkien, Dyson, Joy itself. Everyone and everything had joined the other side.”³⁸

³⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*.