

Decision vs. Conversions

Some Definitions

Landscapes, 112). This should be apparent in all Christians over time.

Decision: The conscious act of the individual to count the cost and submit control of their life to Jesus, which publicly looks like the confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

1. All true conversions contain at some point a

conscious decision to follow Jesus, though not all outward decisions are true conversions.

2. A true profession of faith is a form of spiritual fruit.
3. As humans who cannot see the heart, decisions are an acceptable outward sign of conversion. Biblically, decisions were immediately accepted in faith, and were considered the normative way to initially demonstrate conversion. (Acts 2:40-41; Romans 10: 9-13)

Often it is articulated that Jesus preached a different gospel than that of the Apostles. Though it is true that more frequently than not, the message of Jesus was centered on the Kingdom of God or Heaven but this does not eclipse the fact that when it came to the message of the Gospel, Jesus did in fact preach the same message. Though existentially, the death and resurrection had not occurred, Christ's proclamation of the Kingdom was enabled by this certain coming historic reality. In many ways, we see Christ's messages so preoccupied with the certitude of His death and resurrection that we cannot understand them fully without recognizing these coming realities as the interpretive lens of His teachings.

In the book of Matthew we see the interpretative primacy of the traditional gospel message, Christ's death and resurrection, on the overall teachings and actions of Jesus. Here is a sampling of where and how we see Jesus preaching His death and resurrection:

The Gospel According to Jesus

What Gospel Did Jesus Preach?

Matthew 16:21 (NIV):

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Matthew 17:23:

"They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

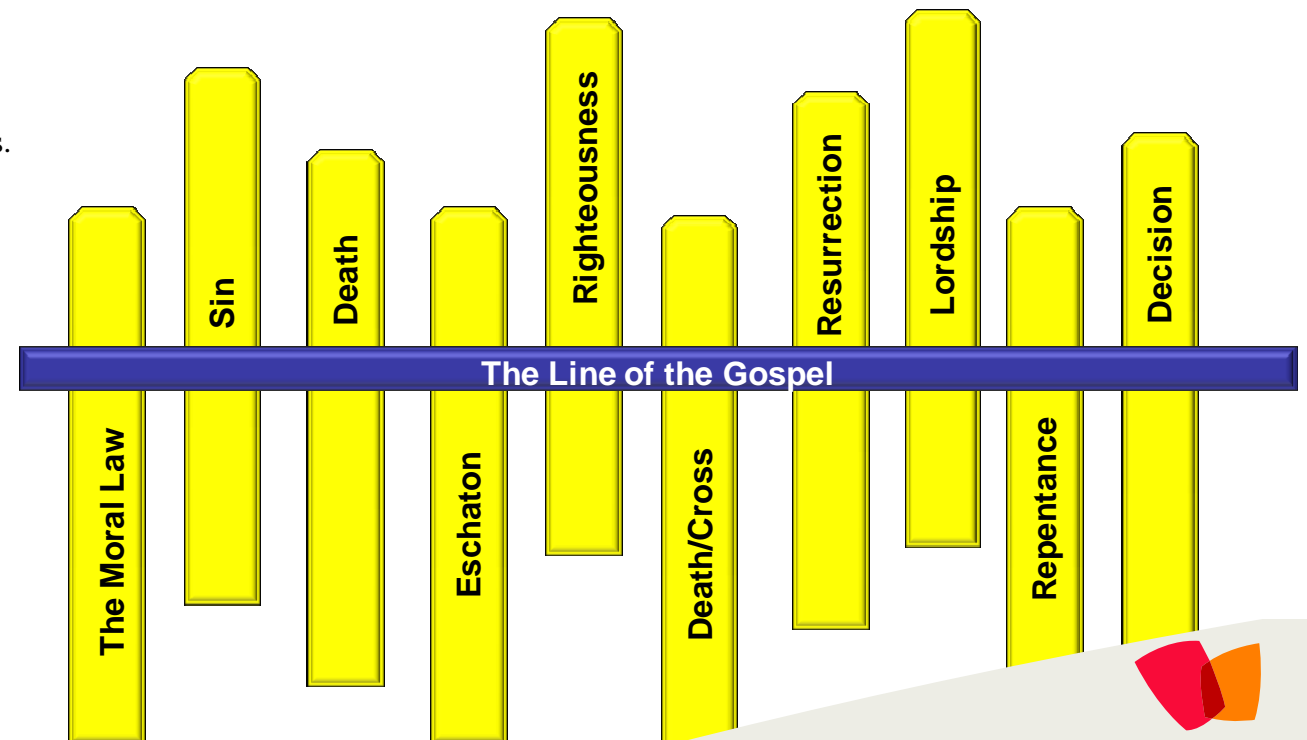
Matthew 18:31-33:

"Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.'"

Matthew 26:2:

"As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

The Apostles and Jesus alike were convinced that the epicenter of faith and relationship with God was the death and resurrection of the Christ. In every single evangelistic message in Acts, these truths formed the center of the message along with an "essential set of ingredients" that allowed the hearer to understand the centrality of the cross and resurrection. In various settings, some of these components are addressed to lesser or greater depth depending on the audience but in each and every message, at least 9 of these 10 essential ingredients appear. The one exception was the moral law as reflected in references to Moses or "the commandments." The law was sometimes left out of Jesus' and the Apostles' teaching if the hearer was already convicted of sin. This "set of ingredients" was the following:



Conversion:

The work of God to bring renewal in the heart (John Stackhouse, Evangelical Landscapes, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 106).

Billy Graham's Perspective on Conversion:

1. Though conversion is a work of God, it coincides with the choice of the individual and only takes place alongside the personal decision of the individual to invite the change (Evangelical Landscapes, 110).
2. There is a point in the true Christian's life where they cross a line from death to life. This specific point may be undetectable to everyone but God. (Evangelical Landscapes, 111). To the human eye, there may appear to be a definable beginning point, or a hazy process of conversion.
3. The mark of true Christianity is a deep, complete commitment to Christ, trusting in him alone for salvation, and following Him daily (Evangelical

