

“Repentance” Word Study

Bill Fallon - Free@FreeGraceResources.org

Introduction:

There has been much confusion and damage caused among both believers and the unsaved by the misunderstanding of, and the misuse of the word “repent.” If the *unbeliever* hears an unclear or inaccurate Gospel message, then it is less likely that he will believe and be saved (2 Cor. 4:4; John 3:16). If the *believer* is unclear in his Good News presentation, then he will become less fruitful in his primary purpose of glorifying God by bearing much fruit (John 15:8). In addition, he brings a curse from God upon himself for polluting the grace message (Gal. 1:6-10). (This anathema has nothing to do with his own eternal life as Paul included himself in that warning.¹ We are saved by grace through faith [Eph. 2:8, 9], not by being obedient in our Christian life).

We frequently hear the so-called gospel message to unbelievers as “repent of your sins and believe in Jesus” in order to be eternally saved. There is *no* verse in the Bible stating such, and this message is clearly adding a *second requirement* to the Bible's one mandate of "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,..." (Acts 16:31). The Bible *never* mentions the terms “repent of sin” or “repentance of sin,” let alone making it a requirement for receiving eternal life.² This fact alone should make us quite cautious of using the term in our Gospel presentation. We receive eternal life solely by believing in Jesus (John 3:16, et al).

The purpose of this study is to clarify the meaning of the words “repent/repentance” and discover what God means in the Bible when He uses these words.

Repent in the Old Testament:

There are two Hebrew words that are translated “repent” or its cognates. These are “shuwb” שׁוּב, and “nacham” נָחַם. In the King James Version³ “repent,” “repented,” etc. are found 46 times in the Old Testament in 45 verses. Please see [Appendix A](#) for the complete list.

¹ The KJV translates “anathema” (ἀναθεμα) in Galatians 1:8, 9, as “let him be *accursed*.” The New International Version *inaccurately* translates it as “let him be *eternally condemned*.” (Italics added in both cases) If this were so, then we would have to discard all the verses in the Bible related to eternal security. The Greek word “anathema” is used only six times in the NT. It appears that in only one instance could it be referring to an eternal type of judgment. In the others, including this one, it seems that the context demands “anathema” to be temporal in nature.

The NIV, by its own admission uses the concept of “dynamic equivalence” in its translation. In other words, it is not a very *literal* translation, but conveys what the translators think is the general meaning of the text. In some cases this becomes a transliteration and more of an interpretation or commentary than a literal translation. It also appears to me that, in some cases, theological bias has improperly influenced the “translation.” It is also the conviction of this writer that the NIV, along with almost all other modern translations uses a less accurate Greek and Hebrew text than does the KJV and NKJV. This is a separate issue not to be covered in this paper.

² The *concept* of repentance of sin *is* in the Bible and is usually a command to the believer. For a more in-depth study of this facet of repentance, please see the Bible study at <http://www.freegraceresources.org/likewisep perish.html>

³ The King James Version (AKA Authorized Version) is used in this paper unless otherwise noted. We are not “KJV-only” but for reasons that we believe to be valid, we almost exclusively use this version. Please contact us for more information if you have questions on the subject of Bible translations.

“Shuwb” As Repent in the OT (See [Appendix B](#) for definition)

There are Bible teachers who are of the persuasion that “repentance” means that we must “be sorry for our sin,” “turn from our sins to God” or something similar in order to become eternally saved. Some of these same teachers remind us that in the OT, the word used for repent, “shuwb,” means to “turn” or to “return” as in turning from sin or to God. This is presented as “proof” that we need to repent of sin or turn from sin in order to be eternally saved.

There *is* truth to this claim about the meaning of the word. The Hebrew word “shuwb” is often translated as “turn” or “return.”⁴ A very important point that is often neglected in this discussion is that the word “shuwb” is only translated as “repent” *two times*⁵ out of over one thousand times that it is used. The other forty-four times that “repent” is found, it is translated from the other Hebrew word used; “nacham,” which has a different meaning. This observation alone should cast some doubt on the unbiblical assumption that we must *turn* from sin or repent of sin in order to be saved. A second point that will be discussed later (See [Appendix A](#)) is that out of the 46 times that repent is used in the OT, 37 times, or about 80% of the time *it is speaking of God repenting or not repenting*. Only about one-fifth of the time does it refer to man repenting. Of the six times that it refers to man repenting, *none* of the occurrences are in the context of acquiring eternal life. The fact that in most cases that it is God Himself repenting, should indicate to us that the OT word does *not* mean to “turn from sin” or “be sorry for sin.”

Dr. Bob Wilkin, in his excellent dissertation about repentance,⁶ makes some informative statements about the use of “shuwb” in the Old Testament:

⁴ Number of times “Shuwb” is translated as: ...return 391, ...again 248, turn 123, ...back 65, ...away 56, restore 39, bring 34, render 19, answer 18, recompense 8, recover 6, deliver 5, put 5, withdraw 5, requite 4, misc. 40; for a total of 1066 times.

Greek and Hebrew definitions in this paper are from the Online Bible Hebrew or Greek Lexicons unless otherwise noted.

⁵ The two verses are:

1Kings 8:47 “Yet if they shall **bethink <shuwb>** themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and **repent <shuwb>**, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;”

Ezekiel 18:30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. **Repent <shuwb>**, and **turn <shuwb>** yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity Please note that in both of these verses, “shuwb” occurs twice. Perhaps part of the reason that the translators translated “shuwb” as repent, once in each of the two instances, is the tendency for them not to repeat the same word in the same context for the sake of proper-sounding English. This propensity can be found in other instances such as Matthew 16:25, 26: For whosoever will save his **life** (ψυχη) shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his **life** (ψυχη) for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own **soul**? (ψυχη) or what shall a man give in exchange for his **soul**? (ψυχη).

⁶ This paragraph, including footnotes is from “Part 2: The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament” found at <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/1989i/Wilkin.html> by Dr. Bob Wilkin. I would recommend the diligent student to read the whole paper along with many other excellent articles available at the same website.

Due to subsequent Bible study, Dr. Wilkin later adopted a different view of repentance than indicated in his earlier paper on the subject. (see <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/1998i/Wilkin.html>) This writer also encountered a similar experience. I had known for years that the Greek word translated “repentance” meant

This term is the twelfth most common word in the OT.⁷ It has a basic sense of “to turn,” “to turn back,” “to go back,” or “to return.”⁸ In the vast majority of its uses it refers to literal changes of direction. For example, Moses, after being in the tabernacle, “would return to the camp” (Exod 33:11). Of its 1,056 OT uses only 203 occur in religious contexts.⁹ In all but one passage those religious uses refer to Israel or God turning toward or away from one another.¹⁰

“Nacham” As Repent in the OT (See [Appendix C](#) for definition)

“Nacham” is used 108 times in the OT and is translated some form of "repent" 41 times. It is translated as "comfort" or "comforter" 66 times. Whereas "shuwb" means something similar to "turn" or "return," "nacham" has a different meaning similar to being "eased" or "comforted." Neither word seems to have the identical meaning as the most common New Testament Greek word for "repent" (metanoeo), which basically means "a change of mind."

Summary of OT usage of "Repent"

Neither word that is translated "repent" in the OT is consistently translated as such; "Shuwb" about 2/10 of 1% and "Nacham" 38%. This could indicate that "repent" may not even be the best translation in many cases. The majority of the time it is God who repents or does not repent, indicating that "repent" in the OT does not categorically mean to "turn from sin" or to "be sorry for sin."

Nowhere in the OT is repentance associated with receiving eternal life. We cannot establish from the OT that we must "repent of sins" to be eternally saved.¹¹

a change of mind. I inferred that this meant a change of mind about Jesus and a resultant belief in Him. This interpretation does not conflict with the basic premise of salvation by faith/belief alone, but my study for a number of years brought me to another conclusion which I believe concurs not only with the Biblically congruent faith-alone in Jesus-alone message for eternal life, but also with the rest of the Word on the subject. I then read a book by Zane Hodges who had already been where I had been and had progressed much further, refining many of the details in the process. Hodges' honest and thorough study “connected the dots” for me.

I suggest any serious student to honestly read and re-read this book. It is “*Harmony With God: A Fresh Look at Repentance*” by Zane Hodges. It is available to purchase from

<http://www.faithalone.org/bookstore/books.html> or can be read online or downloaded:

Part 1 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n3/v8n3_1.pdf

Part 2 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n4/v8n4_3.pdf

Part 3 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v9n1/v9n1_2.pdf

The hard copy contains a very helpful scripture index.

⁷ Holladay, *SUBH*, 2.

⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* s.v. “שׁוּב” 996-97; Holladay, *SUBH*, 51-115.

⁹ Wurthwein suggests (“metanoia,” 984), but does not demonstrate, that there are only about 118 theological uses.” Holladay (*SUBH*, 116) suggests that there are 144 “covenantal uses of the verb and 19 of derived nouns and adjectives. However, through my own study I have found 203 religious uses. See Robert N. Wilkin, *Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament*. (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 210-12 for a complete listing.

¹⁰ Jonah 3:5-10 refers to non-Israelites (i.e., Ninevites). They turned to the Lord and, as a result, He then turned His burning anger away from them.

¹¹ One might object to this assertion by suggesting that after Jonah finally got right with God, that Nineveh repented and was saved. “... Salvation is of the LORD” in Jonah 2:9, should not be construed as speaking of eternal life. The context refers to the saving of Jonah’s physical life and possibly an indirect reference to the potential physical salvation of the Ninevites if they repent. Of the 300-plus occurrences of “save” or

Repent in the New Testament:

Forms of the word "repent" or "repentance" are used in the New Testament 66 times in 60 verses. Please see verse list in [Appendix E](#). The majority of the time it is translated from the Greek words μετανοια, metanoia; noun, and μετανοεω, metaneo, verb. It simply means "to change one's mind."¹² The *object* of the change of mind has to be determined by the context. A person can repent or change his mind about *anything*. Sorrow or a changed life after repentance may or may not occur but *it is not in the meaning of the word itself*. As opposed to the OT, the words used in the Greek NT for repent/repentance are consistently translated as such. Six of the occurrences in the New Testament "repent" are translated from a form of the Greek word "metamelomai" and it can have a meaning of "caring afterwards, or "regret."¹³ (Appendix D).

"salvation" in the OT, almost all refer to some kind of temporal salvation such as saving the life, saving from pestilence, from enemies, etc. About 44 times the word "Salvation" refers to the proper noun of Yeshua, the Savior.

I propose that the message that God told Jonah to preach was not what we usually think of as a "gospel" message of believing in Jesus in order to receive eternal life. Let's see if the text actually shows that he was to preach a city-wide turning from sin which would result in a temporal salvation; that the people and their city not be physically destroyed. In 1:2, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh "...for their wickedness is come up before me." After Jonah's rebellion and encounter with the great fish, he arrived in Nineveh (3:3) and proclaimed the message that they had forty days until the city would be overthrown (3:4). The people believed the message and the king proclaimed a fast saying, "let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." (3:8, "turning from his evil way" is *not* the good news of salvation by grace through faith). The king then wonders, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (3:9). (It is interesting that some who would teach that we have to "repent," i.e. turn from sin, in order to be eternally saved, use this verse as a proof text. The verse is *not* speaking of a person turning from their sin for eternal life, but of God repenting of the tragic outcome that Nineveh would have received had they not believed the preacher.)

In verse 10 we read, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Underline added) We do not receive eternal life by our works or by turning from our evil way (Eph. 2:8, 9). This was obviously speaking of a physical destruction of the city as 4:11 speaks of God sparing Nineveh, both the human and bovine members. Cows are not candidates for eternal life.

Though I think it likely that there was also some message about faith in Yahweh for eternal life (cf. 1:14, 16), this is not the purpose of the text and it is not stated.

In two of these verses both "shuwb" and "nacham" are used:

Jon 3:9 Who can tell if God will turn <shuwb> and repent <nacham>, and turn away <shuwb> from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

Jon 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned <shuwb> from their evil way; and God repented <nacham> of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

¹² "Metaneo" comes from two Greek words: "meta" (μετα), with the accusative means "after." and "noeo" (νοεω), "to perceive, understand, comprehend; from "nous" (νοος) the mind, intellect. It literally means an "afterthought."

¹³ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon of the NT, defines "metamelomai" as "(feel) regret," "repent," and in some places can "it can also mean simply change one's mind."

The following verses translate "metamelomai" as repent. The usual Greek word is a form of "metanoia."

Mt 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Mt 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Many times the unsaved person is exhorted by well-meaning pastors and Bible teachers to "repent of their sins and believe in Jesus in order to receive eternal life. This message is so widespread that we tend to assume that it is in the Bible. As mentioned earlier, the terms "repent of sin" or "repentance of sin" are not even to be found in God's word.

When a person hears that he must "repent of sin" in order to be eternally saved, he usually thinks that he must give up his sin in some vague manner or at least be sorry enough to be willing to attempt to reduce his sinning to some degree. Logically speaking, this takes a person who is already blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3,4) and thrusts him into an endless sea of subjectivity. How much sin must be eliminated and for how long? What if he succeeds today in some area of sin but fails tomorrow? Does he lose his salvation? Should he just be concerned about the "popular" sins; the ones that legalistic people judge us for but that God does not mention as sins (e.g. smoking, drinking, dancing, certain clothing, etc) and ignore those which God does mention such as pride, gossip, etc.? Just how good does he have to be to enter Heaven? The answer to that is that he must be "perfect." That will only occur when we have Jesus' righteousness imputed to us by faith alone. (2 Cor. 5:21). Repentance is *not* presented in the Word of God as being a requirement for eternal life.

Though the *terms* "repent of sin" and "repentance of sin" are not to be found in the Bible, the *concept* of repentance of sin is found. Usually, this is a message for those who have already believed in Jesus and have eternal life. Some examples of this are:

1. Simon the sorcerer in Acts, Chapter 8. In verse 12 and 13, we read that Simon believed in Jesus along with others. In verses 18 and 19, Simon then sees the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit being given and offers the apostles money so that he could have the same power. Peter admonishes him and tells him to "repent of this thy wickedness," and pray that he might be forgiven. Please note that this is speaking of a believer's forgiveness, not an unsaved person's justification. Forgiveness is a fellowship issue, not a forensic issue.

2. In 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, Paul rejoices that the believers "sorrowed to repentance" concerning the carnal lifestyle that they were embracing. Verse 10 states in part, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance (metanoia) to salvation not to be repented (metamelomai) of...." Note that the text does *not* say that godly sorrow *is* repentance.

3. In 2 Corinthians 12:21, we find the Apostle Paul lamenting that he might find the Corinthian believers still in a deplorable state of disobedient Christian living. He mourns that some "have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."

Mt 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
2Co 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.
Heb 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)
In addition, the following verses using μεταμελομαι, metamelomai, with a negative prefix
Ro 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (αμεταμελομαι)
2Co 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance (μετανοια) to salvation not to be repented of: (αμεταμελομαι) but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

4. In Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, we find admonitions to believers in five of the seven churches to repent of specifically mentioned patterns of sin in which they were engaged.¹⁴ Please note that in *none* of the abovementioned instances did the repentance have anything to do with them being eternally saved.

5. Even in Luke 15, there is good reason to believe that the two references to the “joy in heaven over one sinner who repents,” (verses 7, 10) are frequently misused; as both of them are referring to straying believers and have nothing to do with an unsaved person becoming justified in God’s sight (just as the “prodigal” son later in the same chapter who remained a son, though a disobedient and straying one, until he repented and judged his sin).¹⁵

6. Repentance is also commanded to a crowd of unknown spiritual status in order to avoid God’s temporal judgment. For example, a pair of often misused verses is Luke 13:3, 5; “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”¹⁶ The word “likewise” should tell us something about the meaning of the exhortation. Both verses refer in the context to those who experienced sudden and calamitous deaths. Verse four implies that this exhortation is addressed to them because of their ungodly attitude about their own sin. This prophecy was most likely fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD (verses 34, 35). According to Josephus, around 1,100,000 Jews died during this Roman siege. Please note also, that the *one* requirement for eternal justification given over 150 times in the NT; belief, is *not* mentioned once in this passage. It is *not* a passage telling us how to be eternally saved.

6. In Revelation 9; 20, 21 and 16:9, 11, we find examples of God's temporal judgment upon the *unbeliever* for not forsaking mentioned patterns of sin. This again is not in the context of believing in Jesus and receiving eternal life. This also is referring to what will occur during the Great Tribulation period.

Some who proclaim the message of "repent of sin and believe in Jesus" legitimately lament the sad state of the average believer and even the general condition of the body of Christ today. With some, the rationale seems to be that since believers are living such a carnal lifestyle, that we need to make it "hard" to get saved; that they need to have some level of obedience to Jesus before they even receive that gift of eternal life. If we have to earn it, it no longer is a gift.

There are those who would require a believer to "turn from sin" in order to be saved. This is sometimes called "*front-loading*" the gospel. Others would require that a person must show a certain pattern of good works after they believe or they either would lose their eternal life or prove that they were never saved at all. This is sometimes called *back-loading* the gospel. If we could lose eternal life, then God has misnamed it.

¹⁴ Revelation 2:5(x2); 2:16; 2:21(x2); 2:22; 3:3; 3:19.

¹⁵ Again I recommend the serious student to honestly read and re-read this book. It is "*Harmony With God: A Fresh Look at Repentance*" by Zane Hodges. It is available to purchase from <http://www.faithalone.org/bookstore/books.html> or can be read online or downloaded:
Part 1 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n3/v8n3_1.pdf
Part 2 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n4/v8n4_3.pdf
Part 3 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v9n1/v9n1_2.pdf
This book adequately explains Luke 15, and many other common objections to the grace message in relation to repentance.

¹⁶ Helpful Bible studies on Luke 13:3, 5, can be found at <http://www.freegraceresources.org/luke133.html>

In either case, the requirement is made that we must do something of ourselves to add to Christ's perfect payment that He made on the cross for us. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." If we require some level of Christian growth *before* a person is born again, we also negate the process of Christian growth that God commands in the believer's life. Though the intent of this spurious message may be admirable, we cannot properly correct error by teaching more error.

Jesus said, speaking of His Holy Spirit which was to come, that He would "...reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me;..." (John 16:8, 9). He did not say that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of not repenting of their sins (plural), but that He would convict them of *the sin of unbelief*. (Italics added) Should not this make a vital impact upon our Gospel presentation? How often do we hear a false but well-intentioned faith-plus-works message proclaimed?

The stated purpose of the Gospel of John is that people would believe and have life through His name (John 20:31). John does not mention the word "repent" anywhere in the book of John. Therefore, I conclude that John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does not think that repentance is necessary for someone to believe and have life. I also am unable to find any NT verse which requires repentance for the receiving of eternal life. Repentance, sorrow for sin, gratefulness, etc. may accompany the circumstances of someone believing in Jesus but only belief is stated as *the* requirement.

There are verses which refer both to repentance and "forgiveness" or "remission" of sins. Forgiveness and justification are two different issues. It appears that the Jews of Palestine during the ministry of John the Baptist who nationally had a part in rejecting and crucifying Jesus had some different requirements for forgiveness and even receiving the Holy Spirit, (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; 3:19, compare with the Gentile, Cornelius, in Acts 10).¹⁷ The Jew of that locale and time, just as anyone in any age was still *justified* by faith alone in Christ alone (Gen. 15:6). Along with the above-mentioned fact that the book of John does not even mention the word "repent," it is also noteworthy that he only mentions "forgiveness" of sins in one verse (John 20:23) (NKJV, KJV translates the word as "remit," ἀφίημι - aphiemi, the most common Greek word translated "forgive"). This occurrence is not in reference to the Gospel message.

Conclusion and Summary

All this controversy about the purity and clarity of the gospel of eternal salvation may seem to be "nit-picking." I am pleading for the lost person who has been blinded by a faith-plus-works salvation message just as I had been for years. I intend this paper to be a declaration of the importance of getting the Biblical saving message to the lost. So many are religious but have not believed in Jesus in order to have eternal life. The misuse of repentance is only one of many issues that Satan uses to blind the lost. He is content for people to do good works as long as they do not believe in Jesus for eternal life, or even if they believe in Jesus *plus* something else. His ministers are sometimes "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 10:2-4, 13-15). This passage tells me that we can sometimes find Satan's ministers in church pulpits, and that they are teaching man's righteousness.

¹⁷ These verses are ably covered in the book recommended in footnote 15.

"Repent and believe"¹⁸ or "turn from your sins and believe" is a commonly heard "gospel" message today. It is confusing as the unbeliever does not quite know how much of his own goodness is required. Many have repeatedly tried and failed, then finally "threw out the baby with the bathwater." I have shared the John 3:16 message to many who had already wisely rejected the false message and then when they realized that salvation was by grace through faith, believed in Jesus and received the gift of eternal life. *Some* of these have gone on into obedient living but all who believed will live eternally with Jesus. This erroneous message confuses the unsaved and hinders reproduction of the believer. It is contrary to God's word.

The Old Testament words for "repentance" are not even consistently translated as such and we are frequently told that God repented. The word does not mean to "to turn from sin." Repent in the OT is not stated as a requirement of being eternally saved.

The Greek word used most in the New Testament for "repent" means "a change of mind." Frequently the context refers to a change of mind about some sinful pattern in which a person is engaged, but not in order to be eternally saved. The word does not mean, "turn from sin," or "sorrow for sin."

The message of Acts 16:31, is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If we must do more of ourselves in order to merit our eternal life, we must discard this verse and many more which state that belief/faith in Jesus is the means for us to receive eternal life. Repent in the NT is not stated as a requirement of being eternally saved.

May we consistently speak the good news of eternal salvation to the lost in a clear, accurate, loving manner. This is one good way to fulfill the mandate of Matthew 28:19, 20, and to glorify Jesus by bearing much fruit (John 15:8).

Appendix A

Occurrences of "Repent," "Repented," etc. in the OT. (KJV)

[Back to Text](#)

Verses using נחם (nacham) where God repents (or did not repent) – 37 occurrences in 36 verses:

Ge 6:6 And it **repented** the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Ge 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it **repenteth** me that I have made them.

¹⁸The only Bible verse which uses the term "repent and believe" is Mark 1:15. The context is the exhortation to believe the "gospel of the kingdom." This was a message to the Jew and it had to do with the earthly kingdom offered to them and not to eternal life. The Jews wanted the Kingdom but the leaders rejected the King. See footnote 15.

Ex 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Ex 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Nu 23:19 God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

De 32:36 For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that *their* power is gone, and *there is* none shut up, or left.

Jud 2:18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

1Sa 15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

1Sa 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

1Sa 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

2Sa 24:16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

1Ch 21:15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Ps 90:13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

Ps 106:45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

Ps 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Ps 135:14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

Jer 4:28 For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

Jer 15:6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

Jer 18:8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

Jer 18:10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Jer 20:16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

Jer 26:3 If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

Jer 26:13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

Jer 26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

Jer 42:10 If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

Eze 24:14 I the LORD have spoken *it*: it shall come to pass, and I will do *it*; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.

Ho 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Joe 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Joe 2:14 Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

Am 7:3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

Am 7:6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

Jon 3:9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

Jon 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

Jon 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Zec 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

Ho 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Verses using נחם (nacham) where people repent – 6 occurrences - none of which refer to acquiring eternal life:

Ex 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

Jud 21:6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said,
 There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.
 Jud 21:15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made
 a breach in the tribes of Israel.
 Job 42:6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.
 Jer 8:6 I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man repented him of his
 wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse
 rusheth into the battle
 Jer 31:19 Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I
 smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the
 reproach of my youth.

The verses where נחם (nacham) is translated other than “repent” are not referenced here
 (comfort 57, comforter 9, ease 1.)

Verses using “shuwb” שׁוּב, where people repent – 3 occurrences:

1Ki 8:47 *Yet* if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried
 captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried
 them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have
 committed wickedness;
 Eze 14:6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and
 turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your
 abominations.
 Eze 18:30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his
 ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions;
 so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Verses containing both “shuwb” and “nacham:”

Ex 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them
 out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn
<shuwb> from thy fierce wrath, and repent <nacham> of this evil against thy people.

Ps 90:13 Return <shuwb>, O LORD, how long? and let it repent <nacham> thee
 concerning thy servants.

Joe 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn <shuwb> unto the
 LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness,
 and repenteth <nacham> him of the evil.

Jon 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned <shuwb> from their evil way;
 and God repented <nacham> of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them;
 and he did it not.

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Appendix B
Definition of “Shuwb”

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07725 שׁוּב shuwb *shoob*

a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 2340}

AV-return 391, ...again 248, turn 123, ...back 65, ...away 56, restore 39, bring 34, render 19, answer 18, recompense 8, recover 6, deliver 5, put 5, withdraw 5, requite 4, misc 40; 1066

1) to return, turn back

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to turn back, return

1a1a) to turn back

1a1b) to return, come or go back

1a1c) to return unto, go back, come back

1a1d) of dying

1a1e) of human relations (fig)

1a1f) of spiritual relations (fig)

1a1f1) to turn back (from God), apostatise

1a1f2) to turn away (of God)

1a1f3) to turn back (to God), repent

1a1f4) turn back (from evil)

1a1g) of inanimate things

1a1h) in repetition

1b) (Polel)

1b1) to bring back

1b2) to restore, refresh, repair (fig)

1b3) to lead away (enticingly)

1b4) to show turning, apostatise

1c) (Pual) restored (participle)

1d) (Hiphil) to cause to return, bring back

1d1) to bring back, allow to return, put back, draw back, give back, restore, relinquish, give in payment

1d2) to bring back, refresh, restore

1d3) to bring back, report to, answer

1d4) to bring back, make requital, pay (as recompense)

1d5) to turn back or backward, repel, defeat, repulse, hinder, reject, refuse

1d6) to turn away (face), turn toward

1d7) to turn against

1d8) to bring back to mind

1d9) to show a turning away 1d10) to reverse, revoke

1e) (Hophal) to be returned, be restored, be brought back

1f) (Pulal) brought back

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Appendix C

Definition of “Nacham”

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05162 נָחַם nacham *naw-kham'*

a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 1344}

AV-comfort 57, repent 41, comforter 9, ease 1; 108

- 1) to be sorry, console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted
 - 1a) (Niphal)
 - 1a1) to be sorry, be moved to pity, have compassion
 - 1a2) to be sorry, rue, suffer grief, repent
 - 1a3) to comfort oneself, be comforted
 - 1a4) to comfort oneself, ease oneself
 - 1b) (Piel) to comfort, console
 - 1c) (Pual) to be comforted, be consoled
 - 1d) (Hithpael)
 - 1d1) to be sorry, have compassion
 - 1d2) to rue, repent of
 - 1d3) to comfort oneself, be comforted
 - 1d4) to ease oneself

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[Appendix D](#)

Definition of “Repent/Repentance”

Verb-

3340 **μετανοεω** metanoeo *met-an-o-eh'-o*

from 3326 and 3539; TDNT-4:975,636; v

AV-repent 34; 34

- 1) to change one's mind, i.e. to repent
- 2) to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins

Noun-

3341 **μετανοια** metanoia *met-an'-oy-ah*

from 3340; TDNT-4:975,636; n f

AV-repentance 24; 24

- 1) a change of mind, as it appears to one who repents, of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done

3338 **μεταμελομαι** metamellomai *met-am-el'-lom-ahee*

from 3326 and the middle voice of 3199; TDNT-4:626,589; v

AV-repent 5, repent (one's) self 1; 6

- 1) it is a care to one afterwards
 - 1a) it repents one, to repent one's self

[Appendix E](#)

Occurrences of “Repent,” “Repentance,” etc. in the NT. (KJV)

Used 66 times in 60 verses.

(Metanoeo/Metanoia is the Greek word in all cases except the 6 places noted)

- Mt 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- Mt 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:
- Mt 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:
- Mt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- Mt 9:13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Mt 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:
- Mt 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
- Mt 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here.
- Mt 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, (μεταμελομαι) and went.
- Mt 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented (μεταμελομαι) not afterward, that ye might believe him.
- Mt 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented (μεταμελομαι) himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
- Mr 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
- Mr 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.
- Mr 2:17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Mr 6:12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
- Lu 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- Lu 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.
- Lu 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Lu 10:13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Lu 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here.

Lu 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Lu 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Lu 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Lu 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Lu 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Lu 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

Lu 17:4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Lu 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Ac 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Ac 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Ac 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Ac 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Ac 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Ac 13:24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Ac 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Ac 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Ac 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ac 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Ro 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Ro 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

2Co 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, (μεταμελομαι) though I did repent: (μεταμελομαι) for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

2Co 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

2Co 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

2Co 12:21 *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

2Ti 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Heb 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

Heb 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, (μεταμελομαι) Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

Heb 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us—ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Re 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Re 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Re 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Re 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Re 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Re 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Re 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Re 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Re 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

Re 16:11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

From the above list, the following verses use "metamellomai" for repent instead of a form of "metanoia."

Mt 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Mt 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Mt 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

2Co 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

Heb 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

In addition, the following verses using μεταμελομαι with a negative prefix

Ro 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance. (αμεταμελομαι)

2Co 7:10 For godly worketh repentance (μετανοια) to salvation not to be repented of: (αμεταμελομαι) but the sorrow of the world worketh death

Both Greek words used in the same context:

2Co 7:

8 For though I made you sorry (λυπεω) with a letter, I do not repent (μεταμελομαι), though I did repent (μεταμελομαι): for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry (λυπεω), though *it were* but for a season.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry (λυπεω), but that ye sorrowed (λυπεω) to repentance (μετανοια) for ye were made sorry (λυπεω) after a godly manner that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow (λυπη) worketh repentance (μετανοια) to salvation not to be repented of (αμεταμελομαι with a negative prefix): but the sorrow (λυπη) of the world worketh death.

(Please note that verse 10 states that godly sorrow *works* repentance, not that godly sorrow *is* repentance. Paul is speaking to believers who already possess eternal life but still need “salvation” of some sort. Romans 5:9 speaks of present justification but future salvation. This “temporal salvation” has to do with sanctification and glorification. It is another study in itself. The point to be made is that this is not a “Gospel” verse telling someone that they have to have "godly sorrow" in order to be justified.

It seems that verse 10 is presenting one motivating factor toward a believer's repentance; godly sorrow. Romans 2:4 states another; the goodness of God.)

New Testament verses which use Repent or Repentance and also the word “sin” or “sinner.”

Mt 9:13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

- Mr 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
- Mr 2:17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Lu 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- Lu 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Lu 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.
- Lu 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.
- Lu 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
- Ac 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Ac 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
- Ac 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.
- 2Co 12:21 *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

The above verses are the only ones that I could find that combined repentance and sin or sinner in the same verse. None of them tell us to repent or our sin in order to be eternally saved. Some of these verses demand a satisfactory explanation. To this end I recommend the book mentioned in footnote 15.