

What Is the Bible?

The Bible is the best selling book of all time. In reality, it is a collection of books. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament containing law, history, poetry, and prophecy. The twenty-seven books in the New Testament include the four gospels that record the life of Christ, the book of Acts which is a history of the early church and the spread of the gospel, and letters to churches and individual Christians. It tells of God's great scheme of redemption to save man from his sins. Is it just another book, or is it something more? It is important we understand what the Bible is.

The Bible Is Unique

The Bible is different from every other book ever written. It was written over a period of 1,500 years by forty different authors in three languages. Yet it is not a disjointed collection of unrelated writings. It has one continuous theme that runs throughout. Not only that, but despite the diversity in authors and gaps in time of writing, there are no contradictions. How is that possible?

Even with many making efforts to try to find errors and contradictions in the Bible, there are none. The supposed contradictions can all be explained when we consider the context. Compare this with another supposedly divinely revealed religious text – the Qur'an. It seems that the ones

who recorded the Qur'an knew that there were or would be contradictions in their work and had to find a way to explain them away. So they provided a loophole to explain any possible contradiction – the law of abrogation. “Whatever communications We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you know that Allah has power over all things?” (Qur'an 2:106). As if the writers expected those who would read the Qur'an would find contradictions, this passage tells them what to do when they find them. They were to simply accept whatever was written later. If it was different than something earlier, it must be because Allah had changed his mind and the newer message was better.

The Bible needs no such loophole. Instead of trying to provide an explanation to any possible contradiction, Jesus said, “*The Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35). How can the Bible make such a bold claim? For the same reason it contains no contradictions even though it was written by forty men over the span of 1,500 years. It is the only book that has been inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). Because God is perfect, His word is perfect.

The Bible Is the Truth

This claim is made in both the Old and New Testaments. The psalmist wrote, “*The sum of Your word is truth*” (Psalm 119:160). He did not say *some* of God's word is truth. It is *all* truth. Jesus prayed to the Father, “*Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth*” (John 17:17).

One thing that is implied by Jesus' prayer is that there is only *one* truth. He prayed, “*Your word is truth.*” He did not say

God's word was *a* truth. It *is* truth. Therefore, anything that is contrary to it is false. Jesus told Pilate He came "*to testify to the truth*" (John 18:37) – *the* truth, not *a* truth.

Because it is *the* truth, the Bible is the perfect standard by which we will be judged. Jesus said, "*The word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day*" (John 12:48). Another consequence of the word of God being the truth is that we are authorized to speak only those things revealed in God's word. "*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11, KJV). We have no right to preach anything but God's word.

The Bible Is Timeless

Peter wrote, "*The word of the Lord endures forever*" (1 Peter 1:25). After writing, "*The sum of Your word is truth,*" the psalmist added, "*And every one of your righteous ordinances is everlasting*" (Psalm 119:160). As long as the earth stands, the word of God is going to endure. Jesus said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away*" (Matthew 24:35). In spite of various attempts that have been made, God's word has not been and will not be destroyed. We can be assured that the Bible will remain until the world is burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

Not only is the Bible going to endure, but the message contained in it is timeless. Many claim the Bible is irrelevant to us today, but the Bible is just as applicable today as it was when it was written. Why? It is because man has the same problems today that he did when the Bible was written. Man still needs to be saved from his sin and know how to get back into a right relationship with God. The needs are the same and God's plans to meet those needs have not changed.

Some believe the Bible was relevant or true at one time but no longer. Muslims somewhat believe the Bible. They see Jesus as a prophet but not the Son of God. The Qur'an is the book they believe they should follow because it allegedly contains the words of the chief prophet, Muhammad. Mormons believe that the Bible contained the word of God but has been corrupted over time. So they have a latter-day revelation, the Book of Mormon. But the Bible says there will never be a new revelation. Jude instructed those to whom he wrote to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"* (Jude 3). *"The faith"* is the body of teaching that had been revealed – the word of God. Jude said this was delivered *"once for all,"* or *"once for all time"* (New Living Translation). The Bible contained the word of God when it was written, and it contains the word of God today.

The Bible Is Authoritative

Before giving what we commonly call the Great Commission, Jesus told His apostles, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"* (Matthew 28:18). Jesus' authority was the basis for all the preaching and teaching that was to be done by the apostles. These apostles and other inspired men were revealing the very *"mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:16). Paul described the apostles as *"ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). He went on to say it was *"as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

Jesus said we will be judged by His words (John 12:48). Paul said judgment would be *"according to my gospel"* (Romans 2:16). How can this be? The words written by Paul and the other New Testament writers were from Christ. This is why

Paul told the Corinthians, “*The things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment*” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Because Christ has been given all authority and the Bible contains His words, the Scriptures are authoritative. The Bible is not just something that *should* be followed but *must* be followed.

The Bible Is Understandable

Paul indicated that the word of God could be understood. He told the Ephesians, “*By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:4). The “*mystery*” to which he referred was the will of God that had been delivered through revelation (Ephesians 3:3). He told these brethren that they could have the same understanding that he had through reading the things he had written. Later in the epistle, he gave this instruction: “*So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*” (Ephesians 5:17). God revealed His will in such a way that we can understand it.

Many claim that we cannot understand the Bible. But remember Paul’s instruction, which was also the Lord’s instruction (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37): “*Understand what the will of the Lord is*” (Ephesians 5:17). Has God ever given an instruction to man that he was unable to carry out? Those who claim that we cannot understand the Bible do one of two things through this claim. Either they indict God of being *unfair*, giving us a command we cannot obey; or they charge God as being *incapable* of expressing His will to the ones He created. I wonder which would be worse. The problem is not that we *cannot* understand the Bible, but that many *will not* understand. Jesus said we must first have a willing heart before we will allow ourselves to understand the truth (John

7:17). But many are uninterested in doing God's will.

Others may say we can understand the Bible, but they claim that we cannot understand the Bible *alike*. The idea is that we will each have our own understanding of various passages and topics. But if we do not understand the Bible *alike*, then we do not understand the Bible. *"God is not the author of confusion"* (1 Corinthians 14:33, KJV). The blame for all the disagreements and divisions in the religious world does not belong with God, but with man. Instead of each one having their own understanding and everyone teaching different things, God's desire is that we *"all agree and that there be no divisions."* We are to have the *"same mind"* and *"same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10). God made the Bible so that it could be understood, and we can understand the Bible alike.

The Bible Reveals God's Will

The Bible is *"inspired by God"* (2 Timothy 3:16). The men who penned the words of the Bible did not decide on their own what to write. Instead, *"men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"* (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come and *"guide [them] into all the truth"* (John 16:13). Paul said they had received *"the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God"* (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Bible is where we need to go to find God's will today. Yet many look to other sources to find His will.

Some believe in the direct communication of the Holy Spirit. They speak of the Spirit revealing something to them through a dream, vision, or other means. They may use language that describes God laying something on their heart.

But when Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit to *“guide you into all the truth”* (John 16:13), He was not speaking to all Christians; He was speaking to His apostles. They would be directly guided by the Holy Spirit into *“all the truth.”* We must *“believe in [Christ] through their word”* (John 17:20).

Others look to modern-day prophets. This is similar to the idea that we are directly guided by the Holy Spirit. This belief is that there are some who receive direct communication from the Holy Spirit, but not all Christians. These would be special prophets that would speak on behalf of God. There were certainly prophets in the first century (Ephesians 4:11), but the gift of prophecy would cease. Paul said, *“If there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away”* (1 Corinthians 13:8). This would happen *“when the perfect comes”* (1 Corinthians 13:10). In context, *“the perfect”* has reference to the completely revealed word of God. Since we have the word of God that has been *“once for all handed down to the saints”* (Jude 3), there is no longer a need for prophecy. This gift has ceased.

Many look to their own emotions and feelings to tell them what is pleasing to God. The problem with this is that our emotions can be deceptive. We may feel good about ourselves and still be wrong. The proverb writer said, *“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Jeremiah said, *“I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). Paul told the Jewish Council, *“I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day”* (Acts 23:1). Paul felt good about what he was doing. Yet he had formerly acted as *“a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor”* (1 Timothy 1:13). We must not allow our emotions to guide us. We must be led by the word of God.

Conclusion

As we have noticed certain characteristics of the Bible, let us not lose sight of the big picture. The theme of the Bible is the scheme of redemption. God's desire is for man to be saved from his sins. The gospel is "*the power of God for salvation*" (Romans 1:16). It is not enough to simply understand the truth about the Bible. We must obey the truth contained in the Bible (Hebrews 5:9).

What Is the church of Christ?

There are many different churches across the religious landscape. Each of them is distinct in name, doctrine, and practice.

You may have heard of a church of Christ. It is possible you know someone who is a part of a church of Christ. Is this just another denomination like all the rest? Or is it different? What is the church of Christ?

To put it simply, the *church of Christ* is *Christ's church*. It is the church that belongs to Him. Jesus made the promise to His apostles: "*I will build My church*" (Matthew 16:18). Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that Jesus "*purchased*" the church "*with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). These passages teach that the church was built by, purchased by, and belongs to Jesus Christ.

Paul said that Christ is the head of the church and that the church is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). A head only has one body. Jesus only promised to build one church (Matthew 16:18). While there may be many churches in the world, only one belongs to Christ. He built one. He purchased one. He is the head over one. That church is the church of Christ.

This church that belongs to Christ is made up of those who are saved. Paul said, "*Christ also is the head of the church, He*

Himself being the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). The church of Christ is composed of those who have Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In Acts 2, Peter preached the first gospel sermon. He spoke about who Jesus was, indicted those Jews of being guilty of His death, and declared that God had made Jesus "*both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:22-36). At this point, many now believed that Jesus was the Christ. This is evident by the fact that they were "*pierced to the heart*" and asked what they needed to do (Acts 2:37). Peter answered them, "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). "*Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls*" (Acts 2:41). To what were they added? "*The Lord was adding to their number [i.e. the church] day by day those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47). The church to which these people were added was the church of Christ. We know that because they were added upon being saved and Jesus is the Savior of the church that is His body (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22-23).

Biblically speaking, **the church of Christ** refers to the body of all the saved. But it is also used in reference to a local church. Paul told the saints in Rome, "*All the churches of Christ greet you*" (Romans 16:16). We have already noticed that Christ's church is not made up of congregations but individuals who have been saved. So a local *church of Christ* would be made up of those who have been added to Christ's church.

The vast majority of churches have their own name, doctrines, and practices. But a faithful church of Christ practices only those things authorized by Jesus in His word

(Colossians 3:17), teaches only the doctrines contained in His word (1 Peter 4:11), and wears no other name but His (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28).

How do you become a part of Christ's church and have Him as your Savior? Upon hearing the word of God, you must believe it and believe in Jesus (Romans 10:17; John 8:24). That belief must be manifested by repenting of your sins and confessing your faith in Christ (Luke 13:3; Romans 10:9-10). You then must be baptized into Christ to have your sins washed away (Galatians 3:27; Acts 22:16). Then, after being added to the church, you must "*continue in the faith*" (Colossians 1:23).

What About Denominations?

In the first century, there were no denominations – only the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18). Paul said there is just "*one body*" (Ephesians 4:4), and that body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23).

But today, unlike the first century, there are thousands of denominations. Is this a problem? Many will say "no." They have been taught to "join the church of your choice" because "one church is as good as another." But the Scriptures teach that this is a problem. Why? Let us consider four reasons why denominationalism is a problem.

Denominations Are Divisions

Often those in the Lord's church are accused of being divisive. In reality, the denominations embrace division. The same mentality existed in Corinth and was condemned by the

apostle Paul.

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

The problem in Corinth was that brethren were dividing based upon their allegiance to or affinity for certain individuals. Denominations exist because people have divided based upon their allegiance to a particular group or their affinity for certain doctrines and practices. In our day, however, many people in denominations do not pay as much attention to the particular denomination of which they are a part. They often switch from one church to another. Different denominations frequently work together for various projects, ministries, and events. However, the divisions are still there, otherwise the denominations would not exist.

Contrary to the acceptance of division present among the denominations, Jesus prayed for unity. *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21).* This unity – *“the unity of the*

Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3) – is not created or maintained by ignoring differences on matters of faith, but by “*all [speaking] the same thing*” (1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV). Division does not come when people are standing together for the truth, but when people depart from the truth. The blame for such division belongs to the denominations who have departed from the truth and divided those who are (allegedly) part of the body of Christ (Jude 17-19).

Denominations Lure People Away from the Lord’s Church

When one joins a denominational church, he is joining a church that is not Christ’s (Matthew 16:18). There is only *one* church that belongs to Christ (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). However, some will argue that denominations are simply part of the Lord’s church. The passage below is often used in an attempt to support this idea.

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (John 15:1-6).

The argument that defenders of denominationalism will make is that the branches in Jesus' illustration represent various churches/denominations and that all of them stem from Christ. However, Jesus' words show that the branches refer to *individuals*, not churches/groups. First of all, Jesus is speaking to His apostles – individuals, not representatives of various denominations. Second, Jesus clearly presented the branches as individuals – “*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch*” (John 15:6). Third, if the branches were denominations/groups, then it would violate the fundamental principle of individual accountability. Jesus describes branches being burned – signifying judgment. We are not judged as churches/denominations/groups, but as individuals (Ezekiel 18:20; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Denominational churches are counterfeit churches. They cannot be found in the Bible because they were not the church – or even a “branch” of the church – established by Jesus in the first century (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47).

Denominations Prevent People from Being Saved

There are two ways in which denominations prevent people from being saved. First, they keep people away from the Lord's church [see previous point]; and salvation is only in His church (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47). Second, they do not teach the plan of salvation that is taught in the gospel. Notice who were the saved ones that God “*added to the church*” (Acts 2:47, KJV).

“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,

'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.' And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:37-41).

Denominations do not teach what Peter taught on the day of Pentecost about salvation. Generally, they reject baptism as being necessary for salvation. But notice the following passages:

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16).

"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

Baptism is an essential step that leads to forgiveness and salvation. Yet the denominations do not teach this. Many

proclaim that man is saved by “faith alone.” Yet the only time “faith alone” is found in the Bible is in James 2:24 – “*You see that a man is justified by works and **not by faith alone.***” A saving faith is an obedient faith (James 2:26).

The denominational errors on salvation are especially dangerous because they lead people to think they are saved when they are not. This is the same type of delusion about which the prophet Amos spoke. People were “*longing for the day of the Lord,*” thinking it would be a benefit to them; yet it would be a day of “*darkness and not light*” (Amos 5:18). When one believes he is *safe*, he will see no reason why he needs to be *saved*. Sadly, judgment will come as a surprise to them. Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’*” (Matthew 7:21-23). Though many are religious and doing things which they claim are in the name of the Lord, they are actually practicing *lawlessness*. Denominations keep people content in their lost condition.

Denominations Promote the Wrong Standard

Denominations teach a different gospel than the gospel that was preached by the apostles. Paul warned the churches of Galatia about this.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are

some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:6-9).

This “*different gospel*” – which was just a distorted form of the original gospel – caused those who followed it to desert the Lord and reject His grace (Galatians 1:6). Jesus warned that teaching the doctrines and traditions of men renders our worship vain (Matthew 15:6-9).

Unlike the denominations, we must proclaim “*the whole counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27, NKJV) – nothing more or less (2 John 9; Revelation 22:18-19). We must do this because the word of God is the standard by which we will be judged (John 12:48; Romans 2:16). Paul said, “*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). If we have a healthy fear of the Lord, we will declare to people the Lord’s standard for judgment so that they can be prepared for their appointment “*before the judgment seat of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Conclusion

Denominations do not represent additional paths to heaven. They are all part of the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). The call for people everywhere is to abandon the churches of men for the church which our

Lord “*purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28).¹

¹ See also Appendix A – *Why Being Non-Denominational Is Not Good Enough*

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

This is the most important question one may ask. We know that all who are of accountable age *“have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Many disregard sin as being an inconsequential matter. Others mock the very concept of sin. Yet the Scriptures paint a grave reality. Sin makes *“a separation between you and your God”* (Isaiah 59:2). Paul plainly affirmed, *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23).

Yet the death that comes as the punishment for sin is not *physical* death. Tragically, infants sometimes die even though they never committed a sin. They are not suffering the punishment of their parents' sin. *“The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity”* (Ezekiel 18:20). Physical death is not the punishment for sin.

The Hebrew writer said, *“It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). Punishment for sin will come after this judgment. It is the *“second death”* mentioned in the book of Revelation (Revelation 20:14). Paul described it as *“the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Think of what Paul was describing there – eternal separation from God. Jesus said it is a place of *“fire,” “outer*

darkness,” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42,50). Surely we all want to avoid such a place! Paul said that those who will be lost will be “those who do not know God and...those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

That is where we will find the answer to our question – the gospel. If one wants to know what to do to be saved, he simply needs to look to the gospel and do what it teaches. Paul boldly affirmed, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).*

“What must I do to be saved?” Our soul’s salvation depends upon us getting the right answer to this question and acting upon it. God has given us the answer in His word.

What Do the Scriptures Say?

This question (*“What must I do to be saved?”*), or a variation of it, was asked three times in the New Testament (Acts 2:37; 9:6; 16:30). When the Jews asked on the day of Pentecost, they were told: *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).* On the road to Damascus, Saul was told: *“Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do” (Acts 9:6).* When Ananias came to him, he said, *“Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).* When the Philippian jailer asked this question, Paul answered, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).*

The same question was asked each time. But different answers were given. How do we explain this? What each

example has in common is the goal – salvation. The reason different answers were given was because each individual or audience was at a different place on the road to salvation. The Philippian jailer was told to believe because he had not yet done that. In fact, Paul had to speak *“the word of the Lord to him”* (Acts 16:32). Then he was baptized *“the same hour of the night”* (Acts 16:33). The Jews on the day of Pentecost believed. We know that because *“they were pierced to the heart”* (Acts 2:37). They did not need to be told to believe. So they were told to repent and be baptized. Saul believed – he called Jesus *“Lord”* (Acts 9:6). He was penitent, evidenced by the fact that he spent three days in prayer and fasting (Acts 9:9, 11). Ananias did not have to tell Paul to believe and repent. So he told him to be baptized. Again, in each of these examples, the goal (salvation) was the same. But not all of them had reached the same point when they asked the question.

We should note that confession is also included as being necessary for salvation. Paul wrote, *“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation”* (Romans 10:9-10). Before his baptism, the eunuch confessed, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:37). Confession is just that – an affirmation of one’s belief. This confession is necessary for salvation.

The psalmist wrote, *“The sum of Your word is truth”* (Psalm 119:160). If we want to know what we need to do to be saved, we simply need to look at all that the word of God says on the subject. *“What must I do to be saved?”* What do the Scriptures say? We have seen that in order to be saved, one must believe that Jesus is the Christ, be willing to confess that faith, repent

of his sins, and be baptized to have his sins washed away.

Water Separates

The line between the Christian and the non-Christian is the watery grave of baptism. Just as the water divided the living from the dead in the days of the flood (Genesis 7:21-23; 1 Peter 3:20), the waters of baptism divide the living and dead today. Notice what Peter wrote:

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:18-21).

Peter reminded his readers of the flood in Noah’s day and stated that it parallels baptism. In the time of the flood, there were two groups of people – those who were saved and those who were lost. The ones who were lost were those outside of the ark. The ones who were saved were those in the ark who *“were brought safely through the water.”* The water made a clear distinction between these two groups.

Peter then said that in the same way, “*baptism now saves you*” (a shocking statement to many in the denominational world). Just as the flood waters separated the saved and the lost in Noah’s day, the waters of baptism make a clear separation today.

- Baptism separates those who are saved from those who are lost (1 Peter 3:20-21).
- Baptism separates those who have been forgiven of their sins from those who are yet in their sin (Acts 22:16).
- Baptism separates the slaves of righteousness from the slaves of sin (Romans 6:16-18, 3-4).
- Baptism separates those who are in the Lord’s church from those who are outside of the church (Acts 2:41, 47).
- Baptism separates those who are in Christ from those who are outside of Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27).

When we look at the two groups, it is obvious where we should want to be – in the group that is saved, forgiven, righteous, in the Lord’s church, and in Christ. The dividing line between them is in the waters of baptism. Do not let someone tell you that baptism is unimportant or unnecessary. Look at what the Bible teaches – baptism is essential for salvation.

This is not to say that baptism is the *only thing* that is necessary for our salvation. The prerequisites of baptism are belief (Mark 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38), and confession (Acts 8:36-38). This way of salvation is made possible through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (1 Peter 3:18). But none of

these take away from the importance of baptism. Just as Noah and his family were saved *“through the water,”* we are saved *through the waters of baptism* today.

Final Thoughts

Centuries of compounding religious theories and doctrines have clouded many people’s perception of the Bible and its teachings. If we can get past that fog of ideas, the truth becomes clear.

Who will be saved? Look at what Jesus said: *“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:16).

What must we do to be saved? Look at what Peter told the Jews on Pentecost: *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

Ignore what man has said. If salvation is important to you, listen to Jesus, His apostles, and His word.

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