

Calvary Gospel Church

"What Is Truth?"

Home Bible Study



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“WHAT IS TRUTH”

Psalm 145:18. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.

The “**What is Truth**” Bible study has been designed to help people see the Word of God is the only true and reliable source of truth about God. This is also a Bible study about God’s plan of salvation.

We will focus our attention on ten categories:

1. Why is it necessary to know the truth about God?
2. Where can we find the truth about God?
3. How is the New Testament put together?
4. What is salvation and is it important?
5. What is the gospel?
6. What about believing?
7. What is the New Birth?
8. The book of Acts.
9. What about doctrine, and is it really important?
10. Are there deceptions and delusions in “Christianity” today?

ALL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES ARE FROM THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD?

Until we find the truth about God, we will never know the truth about ourselves, which is, man has a need for salvation.

Romans 3:23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 17:3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 8:31-32. 31) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32) and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

- Continuing in His word means to stay in a state of continual obedience to His word.
- It also means that we can be made free from the consequences of sin.

Revelation 20:12-15. 12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

- This passage of scripture shows us the consequence of living a life separate and apart from God's Word or of misapplying God's Word.
- First, the books (the 66 books of the Bible) are opened and the record of our life is laid beside them, and we are judged by the Word of God.
- To have your name recorded in the book of life is the goal.
- To be cast into the lake of fire is the direst of consequences and is a judgment administered to all people whose lives do not measure up to the standard set for all men by the Word of God.
- Understanding and applying God's plan for salvation is the only means of escaping the judgment described above. That is why it is so vitally important to know the truth about God.

WHERE CAN WE FIND THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD?

Truth begins by knowing God through His Word.

2 Peter 1:20-21. 20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21) For the prophesy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

- God used approximately 40 different people over several centuries to pen both Testaments of the Bible.
- It is not man's book about God, but God's book to man. In it God has revealed to man everything that He wants us to know about Him. The Bible is the only book of its kind.
- The word inspiration in 2 Timothy means, "God breathed."
- The word moved in 2 Peter means to be "carried along" much like a sailing vessel is carried along by the wind.

The people of the world, influenced by the philosophies of the world, have always questioned the source of truth.

John 18:38. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

- Pilate was not asking Jesus this question because he actually wanted to know the truth, but he was saying it in a way that shows he was mocking or saying to Jesus "Sure, sure, you think you have all the answers but I believe there are many truths." This is the same philosophy that the world has today. It has not changed.

Colossians 2:8. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

- Another way of saying this is beware lest any man seduce you through philosophy and empty delusion. Philosophy is man's effort to try to understand his own conduct or the nature of the universe by using logic or reasoning power to deduce what only God can give him.
- Some people say there are many truths (meaning many religions) that will lead us to God. If something is true, it is impossible for something else that contradicts that truth to be true also. The Bible gives us the answer to Pilate's question by revealing to us the source of all truth. Truth begins by knowing God through His Word.

John 1:14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 14:6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 16:13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: . . .

John 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

HOW IS THE NEW TESTAMENT PUT TOGETHER?

The New Testament is divided into four sections.

2 Timothy 2:15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- The words rightly dividing are from a Greek word that means to dissect (expound) correctly.
- The New Testament is divided into four sections:
 - The "Gospels" that contain the biography of the life and teachings of Jesus.
 - The book of Acts that details the birth and activities of the early New Testament Church. It is the history book of the New Testament.
 - The epistles- Romans through Jude- are letters of instruction to the Church and were written by the Apostles, or those close to Jesus, to people or groups that were already saved.
 - The book of Revelation that is the prophecy book of the New Testament.

The apostle Paul told the young minister Timothy to rightly divide the Word. It is important to know how the New Testament is put together and divided to avoid error in how we apply the Bible. For example, many people have tried to establish their position on salvation by focusing on the epistles. The problem is the doctrine of salvation cannot be found in the epistles. Jesus taught His disciples the doctrine of salvation, and we can only find those instructions applied in the book of Acts. The epistles were written to individuals or churches to help them stay saved, solve problems, or to provide encouragement. Some of the epistles do, however, help us further define the doctrine of salvation.

WHAT IS SALVATION AND IS IT IMPORTANT?

Salvation: a spiritual rescue from the consequences of sin; the act of redeeming that which is lost, because man cannot save himself. Jesus is salvation.

Titus 3:5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.

Isaiah 12:2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation (He has become my Jesus).

Matthew 1:21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

- The entire Bible is about the relationship that God has always wanted to enjoy with the pinnacle achievement of His creation, man. When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, it brought about a separation between a holy, pure, and perfect God and His now hideously defiled creation. Man's sin brought death into the world and defiled him in the eyes of God. Sin is the transgression or breaking of God's laws or His Word.
- Sin is absolutely repulsive to God who is holy. Sin that is not dealt with in agreement with God's Word is what will keep us out of heaven.
- The message of the gospel is about God's offer to bring man back to a place of restoration with Him or of being saved (salvation).

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

It is God's means of salvation.

- The word gospel in the New Testament is the Greek word "euaggelion" which translated means "a good message" or "the good news." But what is the definition of the gospel?
- The apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 1:16**, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." He also tells us in **I Corinthians 4:3**, "But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost."
- Paul is telling us that proper definition and application of the gospel will result in the salvation of men's souls. So, the gospel is about salvation.
- The message of the gospel is about God's offer to bring man back to a place of restoration with Him or of being saved (salvation).

1 Corinthians 15:1-4. 1) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2) By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain; 3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and 4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

- Some religious leaders say that all you have to do to be saved is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is saying it is possible to believe in vain or uselessly. As we go along, we will point out scriptures that tell us what it really means to believe.
- Paul is telling us that it is the application of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that saves us. But how does it work? Let's look further.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. 7) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels; 8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- This seems to complicate the issue even further because the apostle Paul is telling us God will take vengeance on them that do not know Him. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:23**, “**And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**” He was speaking to people that had a relationship with him but did not place value on God's Word. We will discuss this scripture in more depth later in this Bible study.
- Paul is also telling us we must **obey** the gospel. This seems to present a problem. How do we obey the concept of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? It seems there is no connection between the two concepts—the knowledge of what the definition of the gospel is and our obedience to that gospel.
- The answer to this problem is really very simple if we rightly divide God's Word. Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected; and we also must be partakers of the same death, burial, and resurrection but in a spiritual sense.

THE COMPONENTS OF THE GOSPEL

1. **The Death.** The Apostle Paul states in **1 Corinthians 15:31** “. . . I die daily”, and in **2 Corinthians 4:10** “**Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus . . .**” He is not speaking about a physical death but a spiritual one. He is speaking about repentance. Repentance is the recognition, on our part, that we have sinned against God and we are sorry we have offended God. We then go to God in prayer asking pardon for the offence and vowing, with His help, not to commit the offence against Him again.

Romans 6:1-2. 1) What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

- Jesus described two news events that took place in His day that resulted in the deaths of a number of people. The people to whom He related the stories presumed that the people that

died had some greater degree of sin in their lives than in their own. Jesus told them in both instances, **Luke 13:3 & 5** “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

- Repentance is about dying to the old sin nature that we inherited from our common ancestor, Adam. We die to that sin nature when we confess and forsake the kind of behavior disapproved of by God. **1 John 5:17**. All unrighteousness is sin....

Proverbs 28:13. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

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

2. **The Burial**. When someone dies they need to be buried. It is the same thing spiritually. When we repent and kill the old man and his sin nature, we need to bury him in order to identify with the burial of Jesus.

Romans 6:3-4. 3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Colossians 2:12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

- Baptism, as we will see later in the book of Acts, is for the remission (forgiveness) of sins and it is always: administered to a person that has repented first, administered by full immersion in water, and the name of Jesus Christ is called over the person being baptized. This is where the blood of Jesus is applied to the repentant sinner. The blood of Jesus removes the record of sin forever and identifies whose blood it is that removes our sin. In the record of the book of Acts, we will see people being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

Revelation 1:5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Ephesians 1:7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

3. **The Resurrection**. Jesus was resurrected on the third day. We also need to receive resurrection power from God, and we receive that power when we receive the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts.

John 14:16-18. 16) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Romans 6:5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Romans 8:11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

- When we look into the book of Acts, we should see all of these components of the gospel applied. We will see people instructed to repent of their sins, baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, the evidence being they speak in other tongues (languages they never learned).

WHAT ABOUT BELIEVING?

Believing is an absolutely essential part of the gospel, but believing in itself is not an end; it is a beginning.

Romans 10:9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

- This scripture is not an example of someone being saved. Paul is writing this letter to a group of people that were already saved. We can know this from Acts the second chapter, which tells us that on the day of Pentecost there were people from Rome present in Jerusalem receiving the gift of salvation. Paul is writing to them about faith and how it is acquired. Let's continue reading.

Romans 10:13-17. 13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (not is saved). 14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? 15) And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent: as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- Paul, in quoting the prophet Isaiah, said they had not all obeyed the gospel.
- Notice also that Paul is telling us the first step in receiving the message of the gospel is that we must believe. Believing is only the first step. This scripture is really talking to us about how we acquire faith, "**So then faith cometh by hearing...**"

James 2:19. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

- James is commending the Christians for believing in one God, but he says the devils believe the same thing. Does that mean the devils are saved?

John 7:38-39. 38) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39) (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

- In this scripture, Jesus is putting a condition on believing. He is saying that we must expect to receive an experience when we believe. We will receive the same experience that the disciples of Jesus received when they experienced the Holy Ghost for the first time on the day of

Pentecost nearly 2000 years ago. They began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them the utterance (more on this later in this Bible study).

John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- This is probably the most quoted scripture in the Bible, and it is unquestionably true. It does not, however, stand alone as a truth by itself. When we begin to examine what the rest of the Bible tells us about what it really means to believe, we understand that John 3:16 is a scripture that is given in support of the message of the gospel in itself it is not the gospel.
- Through these scriptures, we understand the act of believing alone does not make one saved. When we believe on Jesus, that belief is called faith. If our faith is in Jesus, that faith will lead us to a place of acting on that belief. Acting on faith is called obedience, and when we obey the Word of God, we can find salvation. **Obedience is not works.** Obedience is what God is looking for in response to His commandments. When we obey God's Word, we are telling God that we believe Him and demonstrating that we love Him (**John 14:15** "If ye love me, keep my commandments.").

Acts 5:32. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Hebrews 5:9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

"Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH?

This is when we identify ourselves with Jesus Christ through obedience to the gospel.

- Salvation results from obedience to the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8) and is about being born again or partaking of the new birth (similar terms). The new birth is the experience of salvation. Jesus is literally telling us that we can start over with a new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

John 3:1-8. 1) There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. 7) Marvel not that

I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

- Jesus is the one telling Nicodemus that he must be born again in order to go to heaven.
- He then qualifies His statement by telling Nicodemus that he must be born of the water and of the Spirit. He is speaking about being baptized in water AND the Holy Ghost.
- In Verse 8, Jesus tells us there is a common and observable phenomenon that happens to EVERY PERSON when they are baptized with the Spirit of God. We will see in the book of Acts that people began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The book of Acts shows us also how this experience came to all groups of people.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

**It is the history book of the New Testament.
(The Acts of the Apostles)**

- The best way to bring all of the previous scriptures and comments together is to study the book of Acts. We must understand the book of Acts is the spiritual activity record of the disciples of Jesus. It is the history book of the New Testament.
- The book of Acts is the only place in the New Testament where we see people actually being saved except for the thief on the cross. The thief on the cross, however, was an example of mercy extended under the Old Testament. In the book of Acts, we will observe what was said and done by the Apostles under the covenant of the New Testament. We will also see all of the components of the gospel, in evidence or their implied use, when we study each recorded act of salvation.
- Today, many people in the church world say that to be saved, all one must do is accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior. If this is true, there should be eyewitness accounts of this being said or done in the book of Acts. Others say to be saved one must only believe on the Lord Jesus. Again, if this is true, there must certainly be record of such in the book of Acts.

2 Corinthians 13:1. . . . In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

Acts 1:4-5, 8. 4) . . . And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5) For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

- Power comes from the Holy Ghost to overcome sin, disease, the world, Satan, and all other impediments to a successful walk with God.

- In the book of Acts, there are two examples of people being saved with all of the components of the gospel displayed, and there are five examples of salvation which employ some of the components of the gospel, the missing components implied.

THE JEWS

Acts 2:1-4. 1) And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4) And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

- This phenomenon of a rushing, mighty wind and cloven tongues of fire were never repeated again in the Bible. It is a day similar to when Moses brought to Israel the commandments from God and his face shined with the glory of God so brightly that no one was able to look at him. Again, this phenomenon was not repeated. Both of these events appear to have been used by God to usher in a new covenant by God, and they were never used again.
- The whole community of Jerusalem witnessed this event. God drew the whole city to the location of this phenomenon by these supernatural signs. They witnessed people under the powerful influence of the Spirit of God doing very strange things. The presence and power of God was so great upon the disciples that the residents of Jerusalem thought they were drunk.
- Peter, under the anointing of the Spirit of God, began to preach “Jesus,” and the people became convicted of their sin and guilt.

Acts 2:37-39, 41. 37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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.** 39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 41) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

- **Acts 2:38** is considered to be a pivotal scripture which means it is a turning point in the Bible. From this point forward in time, man’s relationship with God would never be the same.
- Notice that Peter’s instruction in response to the question asked by the crowd includes all of the components of the gospel. [Death](#), in telling them to repent; [burial](#), in instructing them to be baptized in Jesus name; and [resurrection](#), in telling them to expect to receive the Holy Spirit of God.
- The crowd responds in Verse 41.
- Acts Chapter 9 records the conversion of Saul (Paul). Verse 17 tells us that Ananias went to Saul and told him that Jesus had sent him to talk to him and, “**that thou mightest receive thy**

sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

- This particular account tells us nothing about the actual baptism of Paul nor does it tell us what took place when he received the Spirit of God.
- We will see in our examination of Chapter 19 that Paul baptized the disciples he found in Ephesus in the name of Jesus, and when those same disciples received the Holy Spirit, they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit came into their hearts.
- We know also that Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said in **1 Corinthians 14:18**, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.”

THE SAMARITANS

Acts chapter 8 records the revival that took place in Samaria. Verse 12 says, “Jesus” was preached, and “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” **Acts 8:14-17**, 14) Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15) Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16) (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord.) 17) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

We know now that the Samaritans were baptized in the name of Jesus. There is no reference to repentance. In Verse 12, however, we know that Phillip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God. Repentance is most certainly one of the keys to revival.

There is no reference to what happened when the Samaritans received the Spirit of God. This chapter does, however, refer to a man named Simon. Simon was a sorcerer and held great influence in Samaria. Verse 13 says that Simon believed Phillip and he was baptized. Verse 18 records that when Simon saw that through the laying on of hands of the apostles, people received the Holy Spirit, he offered the apostles money to acquire the same ability. Peter gave Simon a severe rebuke. Simon obviously observed some phenomenon take place when the apostles laid their hands upon the believers and they received the Spirit of God. We must conclude that he observed people speaking in other tongues when they were filled with the Spirit. This would be consistent with the other accounts of people receiving God’s Holy Spirit and of sufficient impact on peoples’ lives that it would have caused a man such as Simon to be willing to pay for such an influence over people.

THE OUTCASTS

Acts 8:26-38. Phillip is instructed by the Lord to join the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch returning from worshipping in Jerusalem. As Phillip nears the chariot, he hears the Ethiopian reading from the book of Isaiah, the Chapter 53. The Ethiopian questions Phillip about what he read. Is the scripture referring to Isaiah or to some other? At this point, Phillip preaches Jesus to him. 36) And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37) And Phillip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Phillip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

- A quick assessment of chapter 53 in Isaiah will reveal that nowhere in the chapter does it refer to baptism.
- When the Ethiopian believed Phillip concerning Jesus, his faith grew and he responded. The implication is that when Phillip preached unto him about Jesus, it naturally involved discussing the gospel message, part of which involves baptism. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in obedience to the message of the gospel.
- In this scripture reference, we have a good example of a truly sincere man searching the scriptures and seeking to know the Lord in a greater way. God honored the Ethiopian's desire, and Phillip obeyed the call to go and preach "Jesus". The Ethiopian responded in faith to the gospel message of Jesus Christ and was converted.
- This scripture reference is in complete harmony with Romans the Chapter 10 where it is revealed how a man sent from God with the message of the gospel generates faith in Jesus, belief in the message, and response from the listener.

THE GENTILES

In Acts Chapter 10, we find Peter called to go to the house of Cornelius, a centurion in the Roman army. He was a Gentile or a non-Jew. In Verse 2 of this Chapter, the Bible tells us that Cornelius was a devout man; he feared God "with all of his house;" he gave gifts to the poor, and prayed always. God honored his devotion by sending him an angel, giving him specific instructions to send for Peter. As we begin in Verse 44, Peter already preached "Jesus" to Cornelius' household...

Acts 10:44-48. 44) While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45) And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46) For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47) Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48) And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

- Repentance, although not specifically mentioned, was obviously a part of his life. The other two elements of the gospel, however, are spoken of in these scriptures. The people of this household received the Holy Ghost. How do we know? Verse 46 says they spoke with other tongues, which is the same evidence as revealed in Acts 2. Verse 48 tells us they were "commanded to be baptized" in the name of Jesus Christ.
- This is consistent with Peter's instructions in Acts 2:38. It is also consistent with the process of acquiring faith in Jesus found in Romans the Chapter 10.

THE PAGANS

In Acts Chapter 16, Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in prison in Philippi. It was midnight, and they were praying and singing when an earthquake sent from God broke their bonds and opened the prison doors. The keeper of the prison woke from his sleep and thought everyone escaped. He took up his sword and was about to commit suicide when Paul stopped him... **Acts 16:29-34.** 29) Then he

called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30) And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32) And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33) And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34) And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

- The Philippian jailer was a pagan, probably worshipping many gods.
- This account is consistent with Romans Chapter 10. Paul explains to us that people cannot be saved without first hearing the message of the gospel from the lips of a man sent from God. That message will inspire faith in the heart of the person who has never heard the message of salvation. The person then responds by obeying the message of the gospel.
- We can make these assumptions based upon the response of the jailer and his family. There would have been repentance, a baptism, which we observe actually took place (Verse 33), and people receiving the Spirit of God resulting in the joy that was evident in their conversion.

THE RELIGIOUS

Acts 19:1-6. 1) And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 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. 5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6) And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

- All three of the elements of the gospel are again in evidence in this account: repentance, baptism (in Jesus' name), and receiving the Holy Ghost (evidenced by speaking in other tongues). These elements are consistent with the previous scriptures. We are beginning to see a pattern.
- Notice in Verse two, that in Paul's understanding, believing will include the elements of the gospel. Believing is only the first step and not salvation itself. Otherwise he would not have needed to ask them about their baptism when he learned they were "believers".
- These "believers" were **RE-BAPTIZED**. Remember what Peter said in Acts 2:38? Baptism in Jesus' name is for the remission of sins.
- When Paul laid his hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost. How do we know? They spoke in other tongues. This is consistent with the previous scriptures we examined. So far, each of these accounts is also consistent with **John 3:8** where Jesus said, "so it is with every one that is born of the Spirit." This is again consistent with the pattern of Romans Chapter 10.

WHAT IS DOCTRINE AND IS IT REALLY IMPORTANT?

Doctrine is a teaching of the Church. To be true all doctrine must align with the Bible.

1 Timothy 4:16. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

- Paul is telling Timothy that doctrine, or truth, will save him and those that hear him.
- Notice he said “the doctrine,” which is the Apostle’s doctrine, and not just any doctrine would save us.

Acts 2:42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship . . .

2 Timothy 4:1-4. 1) I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2) preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4) and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

- Notice Paul says to preach the Word with all longsuffering and doctrine. Which doctrine? The Apostle’s doctrine.
- The time is coming when people won’t listen to sound doctrine (from the Bible). They will turn away from sound doctrine and turn to fables. What is a fable? Fables are stories that are not true, man-made myths.
- We must be careful not to accept doctrinal teachings that are based solely on what is popular, but rather on the basis of scripture. **Romans 6:16-18.** 16) Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.
- When we obey doctrine from the heart (with honesty in the heart), we can overcome sin. Righteousness is simply being in right standing with God.
- Obedience to the Word of God will make us free from obedience to sin.

ARE THERE DECEPTIONS AND DELUSIONS AT WORK IN WHAT PASSES FOR CHRISTIANITY TODAY?

The sad answer to that question is yes.

- We hear stories every week it seems about the abuses and excesses of people or groups operating under the guise of Christianity. We constantly hear about churches that seem more politically motivated than they are motivated to care for the souls of men.

- We often hear of religious groups literally at war with other religious groups (even within the Christian movement) and of church groups that are on the political left or right of the same moral issue. God's desire for the church is that we would be on HIS side in all of the issues of life.
- We frequently hear about church groups or people who are supporting causes that God, through his Word, is very adamant about not supporting.

Matthew 7:13-15: 13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14) because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

- Jesus said many are on the path to destruction, but few find eternal life.
- Jesus cautions us to beware of ravening wolves- people He calls false prophets. Such people have ever been active in Christianity. This is just one of many very important reasons why we must learn to identify the true Church and its representatives.
- As we have seen previously, the true church is identified by and with the book of Acts.

I John 4:3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

- Even in the times of the apostles, this spirit was at work. How much more so 2,000 years and many deceivers later!

I John 4:1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

- We can try the spirits by comparing the things people are teaching with the content of the Word of God. In the case of salvation we can compare what people are saying or trying to teach us to the actual examples given to us by God in the book of Acts.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. 10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11) And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, 12) that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- This is a very sobering scripture telling us we need to embrace and love the Word of God, and to love the truth that cost the Son of God so dearly at Calvary.
- This scripture is also very sobering because it is telling us that God himself will be placing the delusion in the lives of them that believe not.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15. 13) For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14) And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15) Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

- These scriptures are very serious. We need to love the truth- the Word of God. We need to compare what we are being taught to what we find in the scriptures.
- These few scriptures are telling us about people who seem to be deliberately devious, but what about spiritual leaders that seem to be genuine? Many times the problem is not that spiritual leaders are deliberately leading us astray, but they simply do not know what they need to know. Jesus himself told us that if the **“blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”** We need to try or test all of the spirits by comparing what they tell us to what the Bible says.

Matthew 7:20-27. 20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works. 23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24) Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25) and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock: 26) and every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27) and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

- This scripture is not talking about sinners but about people who say they are believers. This is also an illustration of the use of faith. God honors faith no matter where it is found, but having faith does not necessarily mean having salvation. These people were evidently deceived by the results they enjoyed when they exercised faith in God’s name. They had faith but it was in the wrong things. It was based in the results, not in the Word of God.
- You must know something about God to prophesy in His name, cast out devils and do many wonderful works in His name. Their faith was sufficient to do these things but insufficient to trust completely in the Word of God for their salvation.
- God told them He never knew them. Is prophesying iniquity? NO! Is casting out devils iniquity? NO! Is doing wonderful works iniquity? NO! Go back to Verse 21, which says, **“...but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,”** this is the person who will enter into Heaven. The will of the Father is the Word of God. (See also Luke 6:46-47.)
- These passages of scripture are talking about obedience to God’s Word: all of it, not just the parts that please us and are easy to do.
- All of the above passages of scripture tell us there are indeed deceptions and delusions being propagated today in the name of Christianity. It began as soon as the New Testament Church was formed, and it continues today in our time. Staying in the Word of God and rightly dividing it is the only safe way to be sure that we are in the true church.

1 Timothy 4:1-2. 1) Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2) speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron

2 Timothy 3:1, 5. 1) This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (People who will have a false relationship with God will be) 5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

The power in true Christianity comes from allowing the Spirit of God to live in our hearts (see Acts 1:8).

CONCLUSION

There is only one truth about salvation. Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh and came for the redemption of all mankind, **1 Timothy 3:16:** And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. . . . There is only one gospel. Paul, in his appeal to the church at Galatia, said in **Galations 1: 6-9,** 6) “ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”.

As we have seen, the gospel message is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our correct response to this information will result in eternal salvation if we obey the gospel. It will result in eternal separation from God if we do not obey.

What will you do with this knowledge? What must we do to be saved? Is salvation really as simple as accepting Jesus into your life? Can we really walk on streets of gold by “believing on Jesus” as the message of salvation? By simply looking into the example book of the New Testament, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we can see God’s own plan of salvation revealed and answer the question that men still ask today, “***What is truth?***” Please obey this gospel.