

Identifying the TRUE Biblical Faith

What Christian Denomination could we name that doesn't regard itself as being a true and faithful rendition of the religion of the New Testament?

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Christian Religions of nearly every persuasion claim to be based on Scripture and many claim "Scripture alone". Yet, they all are found to differ to varying degree on even their fundamental beliefs. Not only do they differ from one another, but they also vary in significant ways from the beliefs and practices of the primitive Church found in the pages of the very Scriptures they claim as their foundation of belief.

If you were seeking the True Faith, where would you begin? Where would you look and what teachings would you be looking for? Most don't even consider 'looking', they just continue on, without question, in the things in which they were brought up from childhood. That is the approach of the vast majority. As it says in Matthew 7:13-14, "*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: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" This relates to religious people also. There is a gate (a way in) that is restricted. Not many find it, as few have the presence of mind to even look for it. There is another that is wide, through which the vast majority 'enter in' completely unaware that they are just following along with the greater flow of blind humanity. It is the rare individual who realizes that his denomination is at odds with the Words of Scripture and seeks answers.

Then as it says in the next verse, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" It would seem inconceivable that sincere ministers would be something other than honest and true in their representations of the Word of God, but unfortunately, that is the reality of the matter. A great number are not genuine in their beliefs and for some reason have no interest in being so!

What IS that True Faith?

Should you be among the few who are dissatisfied with the standard fare dished out by the main-stream religious denominations of this world, where would you look to find the TRUTH and the right way, that Way of Life proclaimed by and lived by humanity's only Savior, Jesus Christ?

There is no better place to begin than with the foundational principles laid down in the pages of Scripture. We find those **foundational principles** listed in Hebrews chapter 6. The chapter begins thus: "*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, [2] Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*" Here, remarkably, the author lays out the perfect and complete framework for understanding the course a seeker of the righteousness of God must understand and must follow in order to become truly converted (attaining perfection in righteousness). Any course of action, any response to the Call of God which doesn't incorporate each and every one of these fundamental steps, cannot expect to achieve his or her personal quest for salvation. These steps are essential in their order. Each of these seven **fundamental doctrines** are understood fully and taught in God's True Church. (And, yes, there is one, despite competing claims!)

Let's consider each of these comprehensive foundational teachings in the order in which they are given:

Repentance: A word that means being truly sorry for past actions, accompanied with a resolve to discontinue doing those things which are

offensive to God. (In other words, SIN, which is clearly defined in 1st John 3:4 as ‘transgression of the law’.) Where many denominations, particularly evangelical types, misrepresent the experience under a serious misconception that ‘grace’ not only absolves a person of past guilt, but that it abrogates the believer from any need to keep the law. True repentance expresses not only sorrow for having broken God’s Law, but provides a resolve to change and discontinue such action. But one thing rarely mentioned when discussing the matter is that it is God who grants the ability to repent! We may think it is our self-generated desire to repent, but in fact it was by His Call that we are led to do so. Romans 2:4 explains, *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* Keep in mind, this was stated to an audience that was very religious but a long way from being repentant.

Now, it may be our desire to repent, but we need to recognize that we must first be led to that point by the graciousness of God. True repentance must be accompanied by the resolve to cease from sin! And that would be the transgression of God’s Holy and Righteous Laws, which He then, upon our conversion, implants within our hearts and minds, under the terms of the New Covenant. (See Hebrews 8:10 and Jeremiah 31:33.) Anything less is not true conversion.

Faith: Normally, we would expect faith to precede repentance. Doesn’t it require some degree of faith to lead us to resolve to commit to God’s Way of Life? In fact, that idea has certain merit, but we must realize that there are **two kinds** of faith, that which is of ourselves and that which is not. Ephesians 2:9-10 speak to this. While there is a preliminary faith that we ourselves generate, often called ‘belief’, that must eventually be supplanted with that Faith which is not of ourselves. There is a faith **IN** Christ, and there is the Faith **OF** Christ. (Galatians 3:22, *“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith **of** Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”*) This verse explains that our belief is to be superimposed with that promised Faith that is the same that Christ

exhibited. (Not that our faith is irrelevant, it is also important in giving us the confidence as we take the first steps toward repentance.) Taking on that Faith which is in fact His Faith, developing it within ourselves, is the matter this particular fundamental Doctrine addresses. This Faith is unshakable and is the element that sustains the truly converted person all through their Christian Life, even under the severest trials and persecutions. It explains the unshakable resolve of believers throughout all time.

Baptism: As a public expression of the commitment to enter into a binding Covenant with our Savior, we undergo a symbolic act of illustrating the death of our ‘old man’ by being immersed under a ‘watery grave’. The importance of this act is demonstrated by the forerunner of our salvation undergoing the same Himself. (Matthew 3:15) But this act can be rendered ineffective if not preceded by repentance and at least a preliminary degree faith.

Laying on of hands: More important than might be realized by the lessened degree of emphasis it is given by traditional denominations, this ceremony is of utmost importance to the committed Christian. It symbolizes the receipt of God’s Spirit, without which a person is in fact ‘none of His’! Romans 8:9-11 is quite clear. *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.** And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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.”* Being imbued with the Spirit of God, the very essence of His Nature, is the means of attaining true righteousness and is essential if we are to be considered for the first resurrection. As we can see from just this one verse, the whole experience of conversion and the hope of the resurrection is dependent upon this one essential experience. The True Church understands and practices this ceremony in addition to baptism.

Resurrection: While most Christian religions

acknowledge such an event due to its obvious presence in the Biblical narrative, most have no real use for it in practical fact. Under the common persuasion of the 'soul' going to their eternal reward immediately upon death, there is no real need for such an event to happen to them. On this fundamental doctrine alone, one can identify which denomination embraces the Truth of the Bible. Plain and clear Passages of scripture such as Revelation 20 verse 5 indicate that there is not just one resurrection. That passage also explains that only the righteous, who have achieved true conversion by the time of the second coming, will arise in what is there referred to as the 'first resurrection'. The 'rest of the dead' will wait in their graves until the 'thousand years' are finished. This too confounds traditional representations of God's Word. There are all too few denominations who can logically and convincingly explain the need for the resurrections, let alone more than one. God's True Church can do that.

Eternal Judgment: No subject is of greater interest among 'believers', no matter what persuasion, than the eternal destiny of their 'soul' in what is known as 'the afterlife'. Despite numerous scriptures which describe the state of the dead as being like 'sleep', the world continues to perpetuate the non-biblical belief system which focuses on the ever-conscious 'immortality of the soul'. While the prevailing world view is that ones' 'reward' is endowed upon the deceased immediately upon death, the true Biblical accounts of this 'sentencing event' is that ones' reward is assigned in a group setting, after a resurrection from the dead. No one is assigned their eternal reward without facing the 'Judgment' alive. That is why the resurrections are a vital Biblical Doctrine, as discussed in the previous fundamental Doctrine. Few places explain the event as clearly and distinctly as the latter sixteen verses of Matthew 25 and the final seven verses of Revelation chapter fourteen. There is to be a general resurrection of all of humanity for the purpose of Final Sentencing. They will arise to Judgment together and be separated according to their respective destinies. The righteous will be 'harvested' in what is called

the 'White Cloud Harvest' and the wicked will be consigned to the Lake of Fire, where their substance and consciousness will be extinguished forever. The idea of an 'ever burning hell' is a perversion of this Final Judgment event.

True Perfection: Though mentioned first, it is the comprehensive objective of the other six. While we strive to attain the fullness of the stature of Christ in this lifetime, we can accomplish that only to the degree we allow Him to work His Work in us. Perfection (perfect righteousness) is not something that we of ourselves can accomplish of our own strength. We are His workmanship, as Ephesians 2:10 explains, and that is with intent that we perform those 'good works' which He before ordained. No person can, in this lifetime, become fully righteous as He was, but that seed, (His actual character by means of His Spirit) is engendered in us when we receive His Spirit upon conversion and the 'laying on of hands' of the brethren who themselves have God's Spirit. But that only works within us as we strive for perfection, ever developing the righteousness of our Example, who set the example that we are called upon to follow, never ceasing. We are to 'overcome' to the end, while a crown of righteousness awaits us in the resurrection. But this speaks to our life experience up until that time. A life of overcoming our own natures and the onslaught of sin which so easily besets us.

The greater attainment of the state of 'perfection' (which must remain our life goal) is when we are raised 'incorruptible', as 1st Corinthians 15:50-54 explains. That event is at the time of the Second Coming of our Lord, in full Glory and Power. In our fully-perfected state, we are to reign with Him over the subdued nations of the world (those having survived through the great tribulation) establishing the Millennial Kingdom of God on earth. Christ and His Saints (His Bride) will rule the world from that day forward in truth and righteousness as ever-living Spirit beings. This is the 'Promise', this is the major theme of the entire New Testament, the very message of hope that was the underlying theme of Christ's Ministry. This is by far the under-considered and under-presented message among the religions of

this presently deceived world. God's True Church understands the full implications of 'ongoing perfection' and the essential elements of its attainment. There is no other way!

So, from just these few fundamental teachings and doctrines of the early Church, we realize the following:

- 1) Scripture is the sole basis for establishing accurate and sound Doctrine,
- 2) Not all religious denominations accurately represent the Truth of the Word,
- 3) The 'majority denominations' are not right just on the basis of their size or prestige,
- 4) There are seven foundational Doctrines by which a seeker of Truth can identify the True Church,
- 5) These seven Doctrines represent the essential steps toward genuine conversion,
- 6) These seven are non-negotiable with regard to establishing True Doctrine,
- 7) Perfection is the primary objective of our quest for salvation,
- 8) Perfection is unattainable without being imbued with God's Holy Spirit,
- 9) Perfection is the result of God's working His Work in and through us,
- 10) We are to have Christ living IN us, through His Spirit,
- 11) A true called-out Saint must have God's Holy Spirit living within to be 'one of His',
- 12) Death is a 'sleep-like' condition from which all must be awakened in a resurrection,
- 13) Our hope lies in a flesh-to-spirit change or a resurrection as it involves the 'dead in Christ',
- 14) The resurrections are an essential part of the redemptive Plan of God,
- 15) The pre-advent Saints will be the first mortals to 'put on' immortality,
- 16) The Saints will rise first to co-rule with Christ in His earthly Kingdom for 1000 years,
- 17) The first-risen Saints are exempt from the second death even in this lifetime,
- 18) After the 1000 years, the 'rest of the dead' will arise, being restored to physical life,
- 19) Judgment of humanity (in the sense of Final Sentencing) occurs after the 1000 years,
- 20) Final Sentencing will include those converted after the Second Coming along with those not.

Two Theological Falsehoods

This is what the early Church understood from the ministry of Jesus Christ as He delivered it and as it was carried forward by His faithful Apostles.

While this chapter thus far deals primarily with the matter of personal salvation, the Apostle Paul added an important precaution later, after seeing the drift that had begun to influence later beliefs. He warned of two important things to be on guard for: ungodly men who would, turn "*...the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Two major theological distortions of great importance: a perverted definition of what grace is and how it works and distorted ideas regarding the true nature of God.

A Long History of Deception

Anyone who has investigated the Truth of the New Testament and found it, has come up against these major faults in the theology handed down through the centuries.

As Christ admonished us, Beware! "*Take heed that no man deceive you*". There can be no other way to verify what is Truth than to diligently search the scriptures daily! 