

# West End Messenger

September - October 2020



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## Article 1

# Standing Before The Judge

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Have you ever had to face a judge or been in a courtroom to witness someone else face a judge? If so, you recognize the serious nature of this event. You recognize that the person who faces the judge is helpless at that moment. Whatever has been done is done. There is nothing else that can be done to change the facts of the case. Now, it is time to hear what the judge rules and what the sentence will be. One Day, when Jesus returns, you will stand before the ultimate Judge. Therefore, you need to consider what it will be like to stand before your Judge.

### **1) Everything about your life will be subject to judgment.**

Whenever people stand before an earthly judge, it is focused on a specific issue(s). However, whenever you stand before Jesus Christ in judgment, it will be to evaluate everything you have ever thought, said, and done! 2 Corinthians 5:10, for example, says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Nothing will be off-limits for this judgment (although He will not condemn you for anything He has forgiven you of). A good example of this is found in Matthew 12:36. Jesus said that "on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak." So, even those words you said without really being careful and thinking about whether you should say them will be included in this judgment!

### **2) Jesus will have perfect knowledge about your life.**

Whenever people stand before an earthly judge, they stand before someone who is dependent on the testimony of others to learn the facts of the case and make a decision. However, one of the fundamental truths about God is that He knows everything and sees everything! Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing the wicked and the good." Nothing about your life has escaped His attention. So, even those things you have thought, said, and done you didn't think anyone else knew about will be exposed in this judgment! Hebrews 4:13 warns, "No

creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.” Therefore, Jesus has a perfect knowledge about your life and is not dependent on anyone else’s testimony about you to learn the facts of your life!

**3) Jesus will judge you fairly.** Whenever people stand before an earthly judge, the judge may or may not issue a fair verdict and sentence. However, Jesus will not be biased for or against you in any way. It will not matter who your parents are, how much money you had, how popular you were, your race, or anything similar. Instead, 1 Peter 1:17 says that God “judges impartially according to each one’s work.” So, Jesus will simply evaluate your life (i.e. what you have done, said, and thought) in comparison to the law He has given you to live by contained in the pages of the New Testament (John 12:48; Romans 2:5-11; Revelation 20:11-15).

**4) You will receive a verdict with eternal implications.** Whenever people stand before an earthly judge, they may receive a fine, a judgment, jail time, or (at most) a death sentence. However, Jesus will hold your eternity in His hand! It will be too late to do or change anything to impact your eternity in a positive way when you are before His judgment seat. With both mercy and justice, He will evaluate your life. Then, He will either tell you, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Or, He will tell you, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). With one of these two verdicts, you will then either go away into “eternal punishment” or into “eternal life” (Matthew 25:46)!

You will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment on the Day He returns. There is no way to escape this judgment. It will certainly be “a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31) – particularly if you have not lived for Him. Therefore, as you recognize this Day is coming, you need to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) so that this will be a wonderful Day rather than a terrible one!

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## Article 2

# How Can I Know God?

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Would you like to know God? God says this is possible! However, most people never reach this point of having a true, intimate knowledge of God. In John 17:3, Jesus prayed to the Father and said, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent – Jesus Christ.” So, you must ask: “How can I know God?”

**1) God can be known.** Romans 1:19 says that “what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them.” How has God shown Himself to people? One answer is through what He has created. Verse 20 says that God’s “invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.” Then, when Jesus walked this earth, Jesus revealed the Father (Luke 10:22; John 1:18). 1 John 5:20 explains that “the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true one.”

Although God can be known in these ways, most people reject what God shows about Himself. Many find some other interpretation for the evidence God has given for Himself through creation (1 Timothy 6:20). And, many even reject Jesus as God’s Son so that they do not look for knowledge of God through Him (John 1:10-11).

**2) The gospel of Jesus Christ reveals God’s mind.** Although God has communicated in various ways in the past, He has spoken to us in these last days “by his Son” – who is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Hebrews 1:1-3). After Jesus’s ascension to Heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to the apostles and prophets to remind them of what Jesus taught and to teach them additional things from Jesus (John 14:26; John 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:3-5). As these words were written in the pages of the New Testament, we now can know the “mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Although God can be known through the saving message of the New Testament, most people reject what God reveals about Himself and His will. Rather than accepting the message of Christ as truth, many reject it and rely on human wisdom. However, 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, “For since, in God’s wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached.” Therefore, our own ideas about God are simply not sufficient to really knowing Him. Instead, we must accept what Jesus has revealed through the Holy Spirit in the pages of the New Testament!

**3) Obedience is required to fully know God.** It is not enough to just profess to know God intellectually. Rather, 1 John 2:3-4 says, “This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. The one who says, ‘I have come to know him,’ and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Those who truly know God will desire to “walk just he walked” (1 John 2:6). For example, 1 John 4:8 says, “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” So, after recognizing you can know God and learning about Him, you must put your knowledge into action to carry out God’s will in your own life!

There are many who come to know God intellectually but never develop this full level of knowing God because they will not keep His commands and allow their knowledge of Him to completely transform their lives. A true knowledge of God will always require people to yield themselves to God and honor Jesus as King over their lives. Yet, those who rebel against God’s will so as to sin have “not seen him or known him” (1 John 3:6). For, the actions involved in sin run contrary to a true knowledge of God!

You can and must know God! If you do, God will know you as one of His own and He will reward you with eternal life in Heaven (John 10:14). However, if you do not know God, God will not know you as one of His own on Judgment Day and you will be sentenced to eternal destruction in Hell (Matthew 7:21-23). So, do you really know God?

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## Article 3

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# Is Suffering Always A Punishment For Sin?

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It's common for religious people to blame sin for why people suffer today. That is, if someone is suffering, others may claim that their suffering is because they have some sin in his/her life God is punishing him/her for. However, while suffering only entered this world because of sin and is ultimately to blame for suffering, it is *not* true that all people who suffer have unforgiven sin in their lives. In fact, the Bible gives several examples that demonstrate sin is not always the direct cause behind why someone may be suffering.

**1) Job.** God knew Job was a righteous man (Job 1:1). In fact, God even told Satan about Job's righteousness (Job 1:8). Yet, as a test of Job's faithfulness, Job experienced some terrible suffering (Job 1-2). Even Job's three friends saw that Job's "suffering was very intense" (Job 1:13). Seeing Job's great suffering, these friends began accusing Job of sin, saying that sin must have been the cause of Job's suffering (as a punishment from God, see Job 4:7-11). However, sin in Job's life was not the reason Job suffered in these ways.

**2) A blind man.** In John 9, Jesus's disciples asked Him about a blind man they saw as they were passing by. Specifically, they asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (verse 2). Jesus responded that neither had sinned (i.e. neither his nor his parents' sin was responsible for his blindness). Rather, Jesus said this "came about so that God's works might be displayed in him" (verse 3) – and Jesus proceeded to heal the blind man to give him sight. So, his blindness was not a punishment for sin.

**3) Paul.** After Paul and others had experienced shipwreck, they arrived safely on the island of Malta (Acts 28:1-6). While they were there, the locals were very kind to them. When Paul gathered a bundle of wood for the fire, a viper came out of the wood and fastened on to Paul's hand. Paul shook the snake off into the fire and experienced no harm. When the native people saw this, they

concluded Paul was without a doubt a murderer and justice would not allow him to live – as they expected his hand to swell up or for him to suddenly fall down dead. But, when this did not happen, they changed their minds and said he was a god. So, while they believed this happened because of some wicked thing he had done, this was clearly not the case.

**4) Jesus.** Even though the others we discussed did not suffer directly because of unforgiven sin in their lives, they had at least all sinned at some point (Romans 3:23). However, Jesus suffered greatly – and never committed sin at any time. Although Jesus’s suffering was still due to the sin other people committed, it absolutely was *not* due to His own sin. 1 Peter 2:21-22 makes it clear that Christ “suffered,” yet that “He did not commit sin.”

**5) Many things can be behind why people suffer today.** We have seen several Bible examples that demonstrate sin is not always directly to blame when people suffer. In fact, the Scriptures demonstrate that several things can cause suffering. This includes God allowing our faiths to be tested, time and chance, the evil decisions others make, etc. So, while we certainly *can* suffer as a direct result of some sinful/foolish decision we make and God *does* discipline His children, this does not explain every time people suffer.

We must be very careful in the judgments we make whenever we or other people suffer. Don’t rush to conclude that someone is suffering because of some sin he/she has committed. Although people should always evaluate themselves when they suffer to make sure there is no unforgiven sin that must be corrected, there are other reasons why people suffer. And, we must also recognize that we will not always understand why we suffer. However, if we will be faithful to God, we can know that He will reward us one Day and our suffering will end!



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## Article 4

# Making Your Faith Your Own

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Why do you believe what you believe, do what you do, and live how you live? For many people who profess faith in Jesus Christ (as well as others), their answers are more about the people, things, and events that have impacted their lives than it is about Jesus! This is because many people have treated their lives as an extension of their family or culture. So, however they were brought up to believe, think, and live is how they often continue. And, sadly, many people never stop to question why they believe, do, and live how they do. They never make their faith their own!

**1) The importance of having your own faith.** Anyone who has had someone teach them the true message of Christ revealed in the Bible should consider themselves blessed! However, it can become a great temptation to start following people rather than Christ. So, rather than being able to defend what you believe and do by what the Scriptures teach, you can only defend it by saying things like: “That’s what my parents taught me,” “that’s just how I was raised,” “that’s what my preacher says,” “that’s what I’ve always done,” etc. Yet, not only is this an extremely shallow faith that puts more trust in someone else than in God, but it actually puts your soul in great danger! Philippians 2:12, for example, says, “Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” You simply cannot please God and get to Heaven by someone else’s faith and good works (Ezekiel 18:20). You must work out your own salvation through having your own faith!

**2) How to have your own faith.** It is very sad whenever people have a blind faith that accepts whatever someone has taught them without challenging their beliefs in an honest way to make sure they believe and follow the truth. Romans 10:17 demonstrates that true faith is developed through hearing the true word of God (which is now contained in the New Testament). So, it follows that developing your own faith requires you to study the

Scriptures for yourself! Like the noble Bereans who heard the apostle Paul preach, don't blindly accept what anyone tells you as the truth (no matter how much you trust them). Rather, examine the Scriptures daily to see if you have actually been taught the truth (Acts 17:11). Test every belief and practice that makes up your life by the teachings of God's word. Hold on to what is good and stay away from everything that is evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)! Then, you must put what God's word teaches into practice by obeying whatever He says (James 1:22-25).

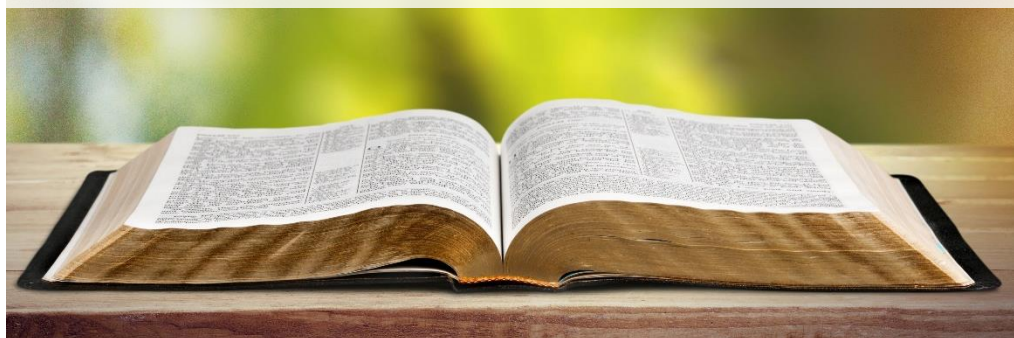
**3) The blessings of your own faith.** Only true faith will save you. You cannot be saved as long as you only have someone else's faith. Therefore, whenever you learn God's truth and obey it for yourself, you will truly be set free from your sins and experience all the spiritual blessings God has made available in and through Jesus Christ! Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). You will experience the blessing that is forgiveness, hope, peace, joy, etc. (Ephesians 1:3).

Then, not only will you experience blessings for having your own genuine faith, but you will also be prepared to defend the faith and help others come to faith in Christ. For, as long as you only have someone else's faith, you can never defend what you believe and practice effectively without appealing to that person as the authority. However, when you have your own solid faith in Christ that is built upon the teachings of Scripture, you will be "ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). In doing so, you will pass the faith you have received to others and can help them come into their own genuine faith.

Is your faith based on your own careful study of God's word or is it based on other people or other factors? As long as your faith is not your own, you should never expect to experience all the blessings genuine faith leads to. Put in the work every day to study God's word and make careful applications so that the faith you have will not be in anyone beside God and Jesus Christ, as taught through the pages of His holy word!

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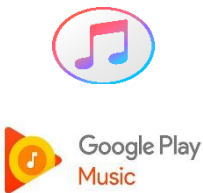


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## Article 5

# Is The Faith Progressive Or Complete?

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There is something referred to as “the faith” in the pages of the New Testament. For example, a large group of priests were obedient to the faith in Acts 6:7. And, the church in Philippi were to be “standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27). This phrase (“the faith”) refers to the system of acceptable religious belief, teaching, and practice revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, now recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. Therefore, it is essential for us to know whether God has intended for the faith to be progressively revealed throughout the course of human history or whether this revelation is now complete. For, there are many people who claim to receive new revelations from God today.

**1) God has only revealed one faith.** God has made it perfectly clear that there is a fixed number of faiths that have actually come from Him. Ephesians 4:5 (in the context of demonstrating the unity of God’s revelation) says there is “one faith.” That is, there is only one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that comes from and that pleases God. This fact also fits with the Bible’s teaching that God is holy, cannot lie, and is not the source of disorder and confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; 1 John 1:5). For, if God reveals multiple faiths that contradict, He would be guilty of lying and causing confusion.

**2) This one faith has been once for all revealed.** Jude 1:3 declares whether the faith has been fully revealed or whether it is a progressive and ongoing revelation. “Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all.” Although God has communicated His will to people in different ways at different times in the past, He has communicated His will to people today through His Son, Jesus Christ – who is the exact representation of the Father’s nature and is fully capable of showing the Father to us (Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:18). Through the inspired revelation that

was given to the apostles and prophets in the first century that has been recorded in the pages of Scripture, we now have all truth from God, which constitutes the faith that has been once for all revealed (Ephesians 3:3-5; John 14:26; John 16:13).

**3) God has already revealed everything we need to know to please Him.** As God has revealed all truth through the inspired apostles and prophets in the first century, consider what 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says about the Scriptures. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Notice how literally everything God wants us to believe, change, and do is outlined in the Scriptures that have been inspired by God! Similarly, 2 Peter 1:3 says, “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” So, not only has God told us that the faith has been once for all delivered, but He has now also told us that there is nothing else we need to know that is not revealed in the Scriptures we already have!

**4) Any additions and subtractions from this revelation are forbidden.** Any other teaching besides what God has taught us through Scripture will not be the criteria by which God will judge us (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Therefore, we must never depart from the faith! In fact, 1 Timothy 4:1-2 warns, “Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared.” Anything more than what God has said is too much. Anything less than what God has said is too little (Revelation 22:18-19). We must test everything people say by the teachings of the Scripture and reject anything that runs contrary to it – no matter who teaches it (Galatians 1:6-9; Romans 16:17-18)!

God says that the Scriptures are completely sufficient in leading us to live in the way that pleases Him and that the faith is fully revealed through them! Beware of anyone who claims God has told them anything different. By studying the Scriptures, you



can know the faith God has revealed and grow into a mature follower of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18)!

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## Article 6

# Are We Saved By Works?

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Are we saved by works? That is, does God require us to do anything to be saved? Many churches teach that there is nothing you must do to be saved. They teach the only thing God requires you to do is to believe in Jesus. However, this means that repenting, confessing Christ, and being baptized are non-essential to salvation. Yet, let's consider what the Bible teaches about this important question.

**1) There are different kinds of “works” identified in the Bible.** Unfortunately, I believe that much of the confusion over this question comes from failing to properly understand how the Bible uses the word “works.” To properly understand the Bible's teachings about works, you must be diligent to consider everything the Bible teaches on the subject – not just what it teaches in certain passages! For example, Psalm 119:160 says (concerning God's words), “The entirety of your word is truth, each of your righteous judgments endures forever.”

**2) We are not saved by meritorious works.** This is usually what people are talking about when they say that we are not saved by works. And, it is absolutely true that we cannot earn (merit, deserve) our own salvation by anything that we do – even through doing good works! For, once we have sinned, we have earned the wages of our sin – which is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). No matter how hard we work, we cannot save ourselves. We are completely dependent on the grace and mercy of God. That is what Paul was teaching in Ephesians 2:8-9. “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast.” Clearly, Paul's point is that salvation is not from yourself (also see Romans 4:1-4). If we could do enough works to save ourselves, we could boast in ourselves and not need God's grace. But, this simply is not true!

**3) We are saved by obedient works.** This is usually the part people miss when they teach about works. If Ephesians 2:8-9 and similar passages are viewed as the entire teaching about works, then it may sound like all we must do to be saved is just have a mental conviction that Jesus is the Son of God and believe that He can save us. However, the Bible also teaches the need for works of obedience that demonstrate true faith. For example, James teaches the need for these kinds of works as opposed to just mentally believing in God and Jesus in James 2:14-26. James says that “faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself” (verse 17). He demonstrates the need to show your faith by your works (verse 18). He says, “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe – and they shudder” (verse 19). So, “faith without works is useless” (verse 20). He demonstrates that Abraham’s faith-filled, obedient works were necessary for his faith to be credited as righteousness (verses 21-23). The same is also true concerning Rahab (verse 25). Verse 24 says, “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” And, verse 26 says, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” So, it is clearly not enough to just mentally accept Jesus as the Son of God. Instead, you will only be justified (made just as if you had never sinned) if you obey what God commands. Jesus taught the same thing in Matthew 7:21-23. The same thing is also demonstrated in Acts 2:37-41. In that text, you can see that repentance and baptism are essential for salvation and the forgiveness of sin. There is something God requires us to do to be saved!

So, while salvation is God’s gift that no one can earn by his/her own good works, there are certain conditions God has placed on receiving that gift. For example, suppose someone sends you a birthday card with a \$20 check. It is a free gift. You did not do anything to earn it. Yet, there are certain things you must do to receive the gift. You must: Go to the mailbox, open the mailbox, pull the envelop out of the mailbox, open the envelop, take out the card, remove the check, sign your name on the check, and deposit it into your account or cash the check. Only after doing these things do you receive \$20. Still, it is a free gift you did not earn. The same is true with salvation. After you do those things God requires of you

to be saved, you have not earned salvation. Rather, you have just acted in faith to obey what God requires to receive His gift!

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## Article 7

# The Wisdom Of Silence

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When you think of the wisest people you know, who do you think about? Maybe it is someone who has given you some advice. Maybe it is someone who has several quotable sayings. You see, we often equate wisdom (in part) with people speaking. However, while it is certainly true that wise people can and should speak at various times to spread wisdom to others, we must also embrace the wisdom of silence. For, God shows us contrasts between those who often speak their minds and those who carefully choose when, where, and what they should speak.

**1) There is a time to be silent.** God inspired the wise King Solomon to write that there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Speaking is a skill most people develop very early in life. And, while it does not take much skill just to talk about what is on your mind, learning when, where, and how to be quiet is a skill that takes some great practice and wisdom. Yet, it is one we must develop in our lives! For example, whenever Job was experiencing tremendous suffering, he received a visit from three friends. At first, they sat with him for seven days and nights and did not speak a word to him (Job 2:13). But, when they began speaking, they hurt Job with their words so much he called them “miserable comforters” who were speaking an endless amount of “empty words” (Job 16:2-3)!

**2) Fools are quick to speak their minds.** Ecclesiastes 5:3 says, “Just as dreams accompany much labor, so also a fool’s voice comes with many words.” This can be true in different ways. For one, some people will talk and make statements about things they really do not understand correctly, thereby giving voice to their ignorance on a subject. Then, some people will just talk so much that they do not properly filter their words. In doing so, the person who is quick and careless to speak often gets himself/herself into

trouble. Proverbs 14:3 says, “The proud speech of a fool brings a rod of discipline, but the lips of the wise protect them.” And, whenever the foolish person speaks in this way, no one benefits. For, Proverbs 14:7 urges others, “Stay away from a foolish person; you will gain no knowledge from his speech.”

**3) Wisdom chooses to use fewer words – and chooses those words very carefully.** Wise people who listen to God recognize the danger of the tongue and how difficult it is to always say the right things, at the right times, and in the right environments (James 3:1-12). So, they make the conscious decision to say less than they could say and put a great amount of focus on using every word with wisdom, recognizing we will be judged for every word we speak (Matthew 12:36-37)! Proverbs 10:19 says, “When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent.” Proverbs 17:26-27 adds, “The one who has knowledge restrains his words, and one who keeps a cool head is a person of understanding. Even a fool is considered wise when he keeps silent – discerning, when he seals his lips.” So, it is better for someone to think you are a fool than for you to speak and remove any doubt! Carefully weigh out every word you speak to make sure they accomplish God’s purposes and not your own (Ephesians 4:29)!

Although we live in a culture where people are encouraged to express themselves about everything and everyone, God’s people conduct themselves differently in their speech. People who are interested in pleasing God and living according to His wisdom must carefully choose when, where, and how to speak. This includes when we speak in gatherings of people, in private conversations, and even in our social media posting! We must make sure that our words are true, beneficial, appropriate, and intentional to accomplish God’s will rather than blurting out words just for the sake of conversation or because we have something to say. So, learn the wisdom of silence and use it well!

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## Article 8

# Which Baptism Is Essential For Salvation?

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The Bible teaches that baptism is essential for salvation in many places (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:20-21; and others). While many religious people and churches deny this truth, they still practice some form of baptism. However, not all teach and practice “baptism” in the same way. Yet, the Bible is clear about which baptism is essential for salvation.

**1) Many different forms of baptism are taught and practiced today.** It does not take long to discover that churches teach many different forms of baptism whenever you talk with them, attend their assemblies, or read their teachings. For example, some teach and practice infant baptism. Some, sprinkling and pouring. Some, Holy Spirit baptism. Some, baptism for the dead. Some, immersion. As a result, many people are left confused concerning this important Bible subject or do not recognize they have not been baptized according to God’s commandment.

**2) God only approves one baptism today.** Many believe that it really does not make any difference *how* a person is baptized – just as long as he/she believes in Jesus and has accepted Him as the Savior. However, God does not support this idea – or the idea that there are multiple types of baptisms people should practice today. For example, Ephesians 4:1-6 makes it clear that there is only “one baptism” that should be taught and practiced and that should unite all true Christians today (verse 5). Any other baptism besides this “one baptism” is too many and not in harmony with the teachings of God’s word!

Although the Bible has taught more than one baptism, it is essential to recognize God as saying that only one is currently in effect. Actually, there are six different, God-approved baptisms mentioned in the Bible. These are: The baptism of Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1-2), the baptism of suffering (Matthew 20:20-23), the baptism of John (Matthew 3:5-6), the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), the baptism of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-

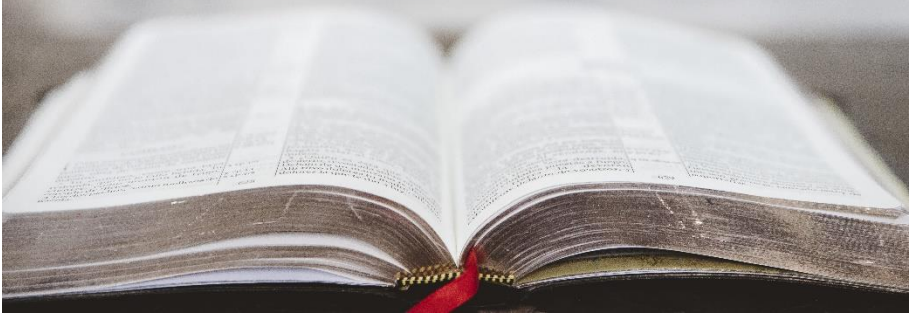
20), and the baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11-12). As you make a detailed study of each baptism to discover which is the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4 still in effect today, you will discover that four are in the past (the baptisms of Moses, suffering, John, and the Holy Spirit), one is in the future (the baptism of fire), and one is required of all people in the present (the baptism of the great commission).

**3) Immersion in water is essential for salvation.** That the baptism of the great commission is immersion in water can be seen from many passages. In Acts 8, after the man of Ethiopia heard the gospel of Christ and saw water, he asked, “Look, there’s water. What would keep me from being baptized.” Then, he ordered the chariot to stop and “both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized him” (verses 36-39). This is a clear picture of immersion in water. Furthermore, Romans 6:3-4 pictures our baptism as being “buried” with Christ and then raising from the dead to “walk in newness of life.” This is also a clear picture of being immersed. Then, that this is *water* baptism is plainly seen in 1 Peter 3:20-21. Just as Noah and his family “were saved through water,” baptism “which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Immersion in water is the “one baptism” still in effect today because it still does what all people need! While the other five baptisms all had their various purposes and time in which they were/will be in effect, the only one that does what we need today is the baptism of the great commission by immersion in water. For, this is the baptism through which we are forgiven of sin (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16), enter Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27), and saved (1 Peter 3:20-21)!

If you have not been immersed in water so as to be saved, you are still lost in your sins. We all need this “one baptism” today! Do not be deceived by other baptisms that are taught and practiced by religious people and churches today. Let God’s perfect word revealed by His Spirit in the pages of the Bible lead you to accept and obey the “one baptism” God commands of you!

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