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The Time to Repent is Now!

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Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." The time to repent is now! "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). The time to repent is now! "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:31). The time to repent is now! "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" (Lk. 16:26). The time to repent is now! God's word, from Genesis to Revelation, is overflowing with the exhortation for men to repent. What does the word *repent* mean? What does Biblical repentance involve? What does repentance do? Our eternal reward or punishment is in the balance! We must look to God's word to answer our questions about repentance.

Repentance Defined

In the Old Testament *repent* is from a Hebrew verb meaning, "to turn, to return, to go back, to change, to bring back." God told Israel to "*repent and turn from all your transgressions so that iniquity will not be your ruin*" (Eze. 18:30). The same word is used in Jeremiah 3:22, "*Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.*" Isaiah reminded the wicked man to "*return to the Lord*" (Isa. 55:7). Hosea pleaded, "*O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity*" (Hos. 14:1). God, through His prophets, begged Israel to "*return to Me and I will return to you*" (Mal. 3:7). The message of the Old Testament prophets could be summed up with one word – **REPENT!**

Turning to the pages of the New Testament, God's message to man is the same. **REPENT!** John the Baptizer preached a message of repentance (Matt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8). His baptism was one of "*repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mk. 1:4). Jesus began His work on earth with the same message of repentance (Mk. 1:15). Jesus illustrated repentance for us as recorded

in Matthew 21:28-29: "*But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.*"

Repentance Displayed

It is obvious from the above Scriptures that true repentance is something that is visible. Biblically, repentance can be seen. While it involves the heart and mind, true repentance is demonstrable. Perhaps there is no better example in the Old Testament than the account of Jonah preaching to the city of Nineveh. His God-given message was simple – "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*" (Jon. 3:4). Notice the response of the people – "*...let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands...Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way...*" (Jon. 4:7-10). Repentance is not walking down an aisle, confessing sin, and then going about life as if nothing changed. Repentance begins in the heart of someone who is convicted by God's message and then makes a visible change in behavior. This is exactly what John the Baptizer was preaching. "*Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*" (Matt. 3:8). Fruits, that is, produce. Repentance is displayed by our actions.

In writing his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul helps us understand this topic even better. Paul regretted having to write such a harsh letter to them (2 Cor. 7:8), but he was not sorry that what he wrote led them to repent. He told them, "*Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death*" (2 Cor. 7:9-10). First Corinthians is full of ...continued on next page...

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Repent...

rebukes for various issues the congregation was having. Division, immaturity, fornication, and Christians taking Christians to court are just a few issues he had to address in that first letter. Their response was true repentance. Paul wrote, “*For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter*” (2 Cor. 7:11). As in John’s preaching, Paul states that repentance *produces* something.

Repentance Desired

As mentioned earlier, God’s desire as revealed in the Old Testament prophets was that men repent. Whether it was Jeremiah preaching to the people of Judah, or Jonah preaching to the Assyrians in Nineveh, God desired that men repent of their sins. God inspired Ezekiel to ask, “*For why should you die, O house of Israel*” (Eze. 33:11)? Ezekiel was God’s spokesman and he was responsible for delivering the message. “*So you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me*” (Eze. 33:7). What was his message? “*If you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity... ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways’*” (Eze. 33:9-11).

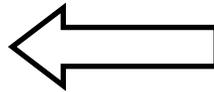
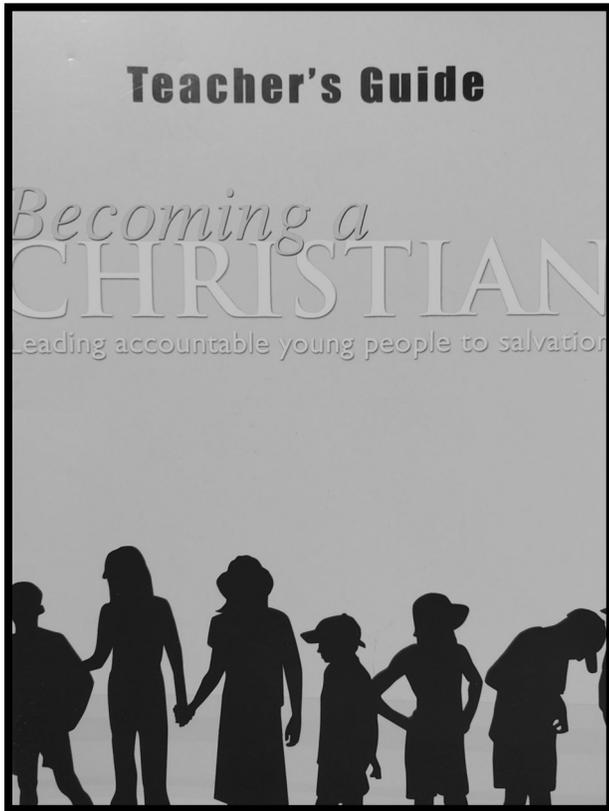
2,600 years ago God was using men like Ezekiel to beg His people to repent! He wanted people to live! Today it is no different. God wants people to live in righteousness, not die in sin! He has commanded all people everywhere to repent because judgment is coming (Acts 17:30-31). We must repent because our lives are going to be judged by the words of Christ and He commands us to repent of sin (Jn. 12:48; Lk. 13:3). Paul concluded that “*all are under sin*” (Rom. 3:9). All men need the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Part of the gospel message is *REPENT!* The Lord is “*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Pet. 3:9). The Spirit and the bride are inviting us to “*Come*” (Rev. 22:17). We must be like the Thessalonians and “*turn to serve the living and true God*” (1 Thes. 1:9). The entirety of God’s word addresses man’s need to repent. When God asked Adam and Eve, “*Where are you?*” He was asking a question of accountability, not location (Gen. 3:9). He was seeking their repentance. That was their time to turn to God in repentance. Today is our time to turn to God in repentance. We are promised only today. It may be that we stand before God tomorrow! When we draw our last breath it will be too late to repent. When we see the Lord coming with the clouds it will be too late to repent! God has no pleasure when people die in sin, separated from Him. Let us always be mindful of this one word of the inspired writers – *REPENT!*

Four Truths About Denominationalism

The word *denomination* is defined at dictionary.com as, “a religious group, usually including many local churches, often larger than a sect.” Is there anything we can learn from the Bible about denominationalism?

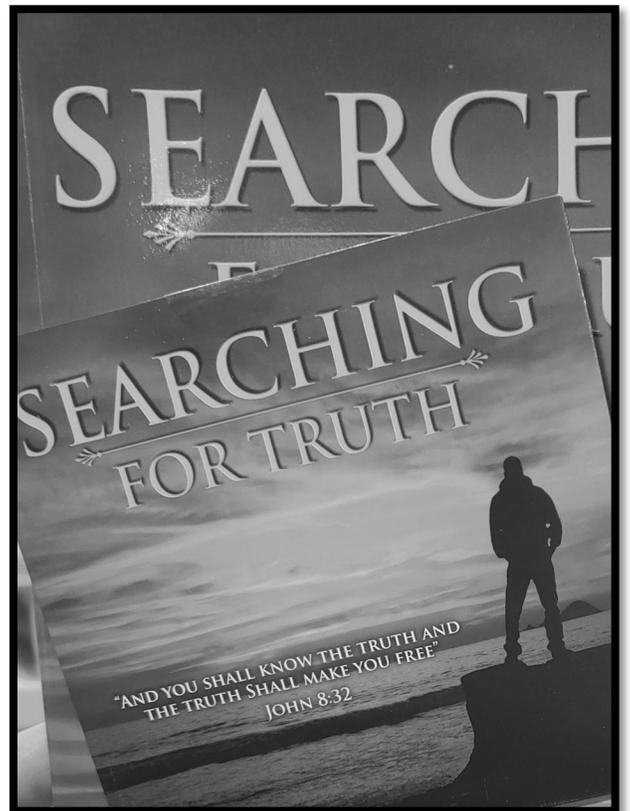
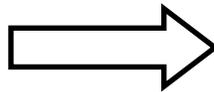
1. It is possible to be *just a Christian* and not be a member of any man-made denomination. People were obeying the apostles and were being added to the church hundreds of years before any denominations existed (Acts 2:37-38, 41, 47). People obeyed the gospel, became Christians, and were added to the Lord’s church, not a denomination (1 Cor. 1:10-15). How is this possible today? Because of the pattern found in the New Testament.
2. The New Testament does not lead anyone into a denomination or division. In order to become a member of a denomination one must do more or less than what is taught in the New Testament (Lk. 8:11). What did those in the first century do to become a member of the church? The only way to know is to study and find out.
3. The only way to get into a denomination is to change the teaching of the New Testament. Leaving the teaching of the New Testament is a sin (1 Jn. 3:4; 2 Jn. 9-11). The New Testament teaches that there is only one body/church that has the divine right to exist (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
4. Those in denominationalism must get out because salvation is only in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). If those in man-made denominations do only what the New Testament teaches, denominationalism will cease.

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Unique features of the Church of Christ

- We use the Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3). We have no creed book, convention, or central headquarters.
- Our name is after the One who died to establish His church (Rom. 16:16).
- The church of Christ began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4).
- Jesus promised to establish His church (Matt. 16:18).
- That church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28).
- The church is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- It was established in the first century (Acts 2:41, 47).
- Jesus is the one and only Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- You can only be added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:41, 47).

What about being saved?

- All people are saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9).
- No one is saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26).
- No one is saved by grace alone (Matt. 7:21).
- Jesus said that belief plus baptism will produce salvation (Mk. 16:16). That is a promise, not a command.
- The Bible teaches that repentance plus baptism produces remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).
- Belief, confession, and baptism is seen in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37-38).
- The Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- Christ is "put on" in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
- The apostle Peter said that "baptism does save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

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