



May 7, 2023

“Believing is Seeing”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

Wednesday Evening Classes 6:30-8:00
Church Workday Saturday, April 29th

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JOHN 12:44–50 ~

That’s a summation of what Jesus taught over the course of His earthly life.

The Gospel has been physically enacted by Almighty God in human history and as such, there can be only one of only two outcomes and both are perfectly righteous and holy.

The first is complete acceptance and entire embrace of the Gospel and the only other is to remain in the default setting.

Our problem is we compare our goodness quotient against other humans. To be eternally in God’s presence would logically and biblically require that a person’s goodness quotient be commensurate with God’s goodness, not the goodness of other fallen and depraved humans.

“God made Him who knew no sin to become sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21, see also Hebrews 7:26b-28).

“The one who believes in Jesus,” has their well-deserved eternal judgment vacated, because the penalty for their crime has already been paid in full. Beyond that they are declared righteous as they stand in, and possess, the righteousness of Jesus.

The Bible is clear that God shares His glory with no one else and that to worship anyone or anything other than the One True God is spiritual adultery and a blasphemy worthy of eternal death.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Here Jesus clearly stated that believing in Him as the Savior God, was identical to believing in the Father God Who sent Him.

The Apostolic age went from roughly 30 to 100 A.D.

The Apostolic Fathers were the immediate successors to the Apostles.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers were active up until the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

In 451, the Fourth Council of Chalcedon, formalized that Jesus had two natures within one person.

In 1054, the Bishop of Rome wanted the “filioque” added to the Creed. That was the final straw and the Eastern, or Greek Orthodox churches bailed in what’s called the Great Schism.

In 1517, Luther came up with 95 specific charges against the Catholic church.

Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland and Henry the VIII in England.

Anabaptists, Puritans, and others...

The Piety Movement and the First Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening and the Holiness Movement.

More radical reformers stressed personal responsibility to such a degree that the church and the clergy became more and more irrelevant. This is called low church.

Verse 45 means that to truly believe in Jesus, a person comes to see Him for Who He is - comes to recognize Jesus and know Jesus. Due to that, the same becomes true of the Heavenly Father.

Jesus exists as “The Light of the world” (John 8:12 & 9:5) and here, He reiterated what He had stated many times and, in many ways, and what was stated about Him in the prologue of this Gospel. John 1:4&5, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.” It is the Light that enables us to see - no one can see anything when there is no Light - that is the outer darkness.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP





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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΝ Η ΠΡΟΣΤΗ
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ΤΟΝ ΘΗ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕ ΤΟ ΚΑΧΑΤΙΣ

We've been looking at the three-part, final public address, given by Jesus, for a few weeks now. Today we have the third section...



BELIEVE
in the
LORD JESUS
and you
WILL BE SAVED

John 12:44–50, 44Now Jesus cried out and said, “The one who believes in Me, does not believe only in Me, but also in Him who sent Me. 45And the one who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46I have come as Light into the world, so that no one who believes in Me will remain in darkness. 47If anyone hears My teachings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48The one who rejects Me and does not accept My teachings has one who judges him: the word which I spoke. That will judge him on the last day. 49For I did

not speak on My own, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

That’s essentially a summation of what Jesus taught over the course of His entire earthly life and within it is not only the Gospel Message, but also the result of that Message - eternal life or eternal death. There can be no other result of the Gospel. The Gospel itself is Truth as it would have to be since it is the very Word’s of the Word of God in perfect harmony with the Father’s desire.



The Truth, as we were reminded last week, is a two-edged sword. It cuts both ways. The Gospel has been physically enacted by Almighty God in human history and as such, there can be only one of only two outcomes and both are perfectly righteous and holy.

The first best outcome is complete acceptance and entire embrace of the Gospel, which means that one “believes in Jesus.” The only other outcome is to not take that step of faith. It is to remain in the default setting.



We talked about how Satan, the Devil, the Accuser, stood in the courtroom of Heaven and accused both man and God of unrighteousness. Even after Lucifer

and a third of the angels rebelled against God and were therefore cast down to the earth, he still had access to accuse as a prosecuting attorney in that holy courtroom in Heaven. Why? God would not bar Lucifer from approaching the bench because Lucifer was correct. He had a legitimate case.

He himself and all his compatriots had been cast out of Heaven, condemned for all eternity and why? Because they had sinned. The righteous, holy, and just result of sin is an eternal death sentence. The very sentence that had swiftly been doled out to Lucifer and his buddies. His point was why hadn't the same thing been as decisively pronounced on mankind? Where was the justice?


It was a completely legitimate charge against us, to be sure, but, as I've said, it was really a charge against God for being unfair. For being unjust, unholy, and unrighteous. For God to do what was right, He would have to condemn all mankind because, as the Bible repeatedly declares in many places and in many ways, all of us humans have sinned and therefore have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Every human has failed to measure up to the perfection necessary to

enter into God's eternal rest. None of us has ever, or will ever, earn Heaven.

The fundamental problem with humans is that in our sinful hubris we compare our goodness quotient against other humans. Where did we ever get the idea that our righteousness was judged relative to other unworthy humans? I'll tell you where... It was Satan in his role as deceiver. Nearly every person has the belief that they are basically good when compared to other people and therefore that God, or the gods, or the divine ooze, will accept them in the end, due to their perceived relative righteousness.

Not only is that idea unbiblical, its ridiculously dumb. To be eternally in God's presence would logically and biblically require that a person's goodness quotient be commensurate with God's goodness, not the goodness of other fallen and depraved humans who can't get into Heaven.

Satan was absolutely right; God has no choice but to condemn sinful humans just the way He condemned sinful angels. All humans are in the default mode and will be condemned eternally because, even though God takes His time, He is righteous, holy, and just.



God made him who had
no sin to be sin for
us, so that in him we
might become the
righteousness of God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21 —

That is why He had to send His Word to become one of us. The eternal Word of Almighty God became one of us in every possible way and was truly fully human. Fortunately, He was also simultaneously, fully God and was able to overcome every temptation and remain perfectly sinless. As the Bible declares, “God made Him who knew no sin to become sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus paid the price for sin once and for all for those willing to humbly accept and embrace Him through faith, as Hebrews 7:26b-28 states... Jesus is exists as the unique, “high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled,

separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; 27who has no need, like other high priests, to offer up daily sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because He did this once for all time when He offered up Himself. 28For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, who has been made perfect forever.”

“The one who believes in Jesus,” has their well-deserved eternal judgment vacated, cancelled, set aside, and tossed out forever. They are declared innocent because the penalty for their crime has already been paid in full. Beyond that they are declared righteous as they stand in and possess the righteousness of Jesus.



The Saved person had the totality of their sin imputed to Jesus Who paid, while having the totality of His perfect righteousness imputed to them, who now reap the reward Jesus earned on the Cross. I really like the line from that song, “Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer. But this I know with all my heart - His wounds have paid my ransom.”



Once again, Jesus said it started with and was all about actively “believing in Him” as the one and only Savior and in doing so you were actually believing in the Father. This is one of the most important theological concepts in Christianity.

Pliny the Younger, was the Roman Governor of the province of Bithynia. That’s the northern bit of modern-day Turkey, directly south of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula. In 112 A.D. he wrote to the emperor Trajan, about what he saw as a growing Christian problem. In the letter Pliny wrote that Christians declared that “on a stated day (Sunday) they had been accustomed to

meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god.”

The Old Testament is crystal clear that God shares His glory with no one else and that to worship anyone or anything other than the One True God is spiritual adultery and a blasphemy worthy of eternal death.

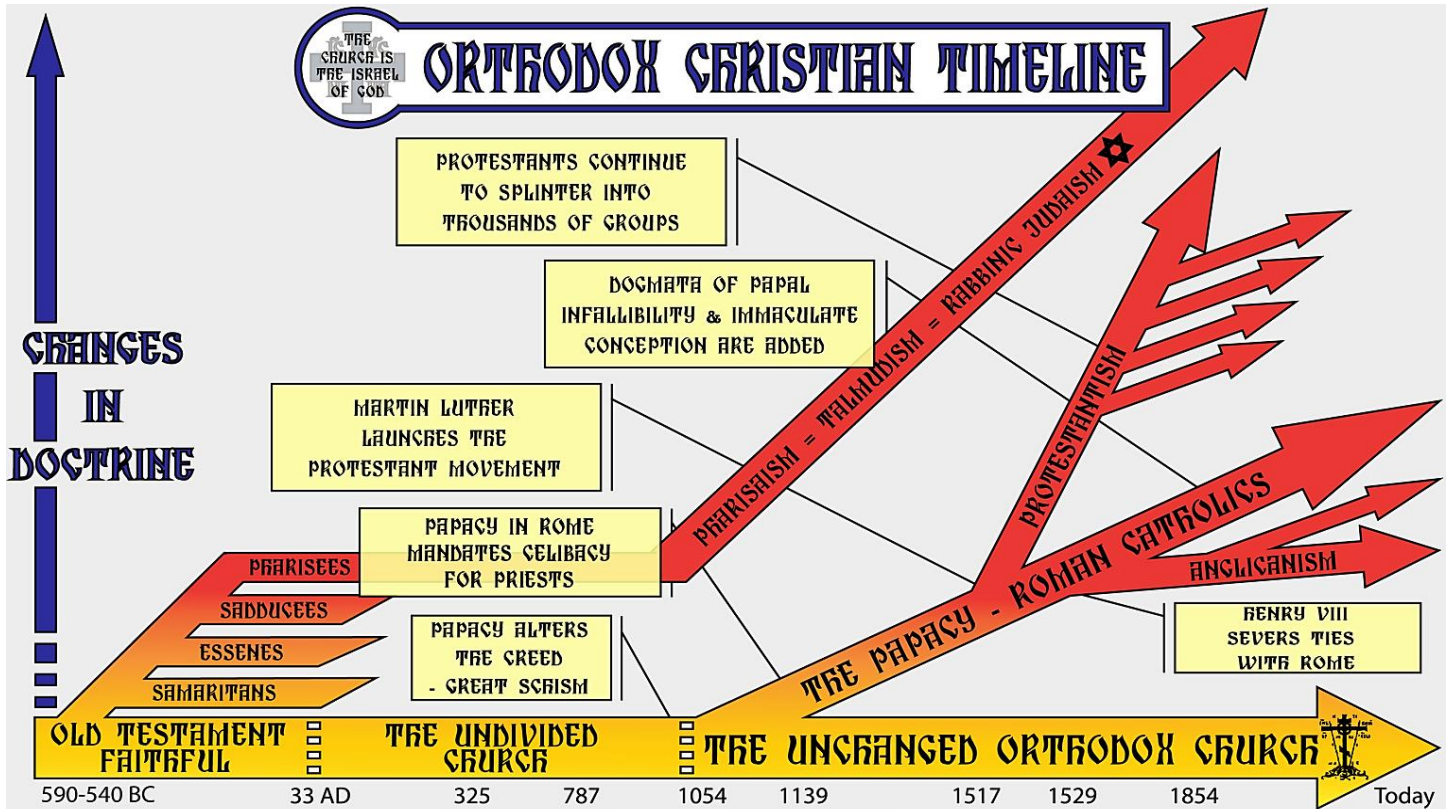
Pliny was mostly correct. From day one, Christians have indeed worshipped Jesus, but not as a god, as the One and Only True God. To worship Jesus as a god, is idolatry. To worship Him as the One and Only True God, if that's not Who He is, is the greatest possible blasphemy, except of course, not worshipping Jesus if He is God. The only way that it can be true is if the Trinitarian belief that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are each fully God, but none are the entirety of God. The One True God is Triune - literally, three in one.

Here Jesus clearly stated that believing in Him as the Savior God, was identical to believing in the Father God Who sent Him. The implication is that when a Christian worships Jesus, we are, in fact, worshipping the Father equally. Beyond that we are also worshipping the Holy Spirit who actually enables our worship in the first place and therefore when we praise,

or worship, any of the members of the Trinity, we are worshipping all of the members of the Trinity equally, because God is One.

As an interesting note at this point, one of the main drivers of Christian disagreement over doctrine has to do with focusing on one member of the Trinity more than the others. As an example, Pentecostals put far more focus on the Holy Spirit, Presbyterians put far more focus on God the Father, and Lutherans put far more focus of Jesus.

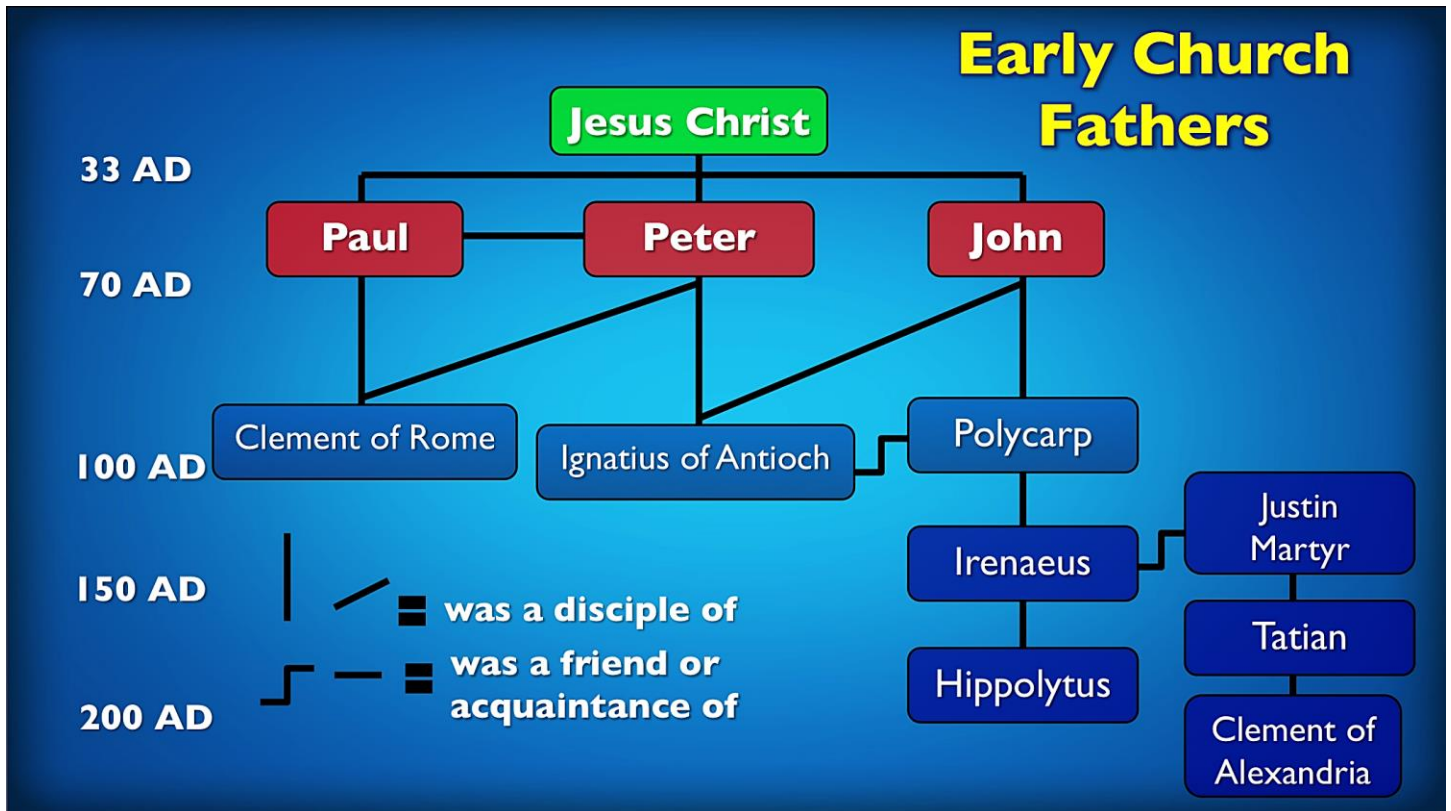
To take all of that a step further and to help define where Alêtheia stands and perhaps to help you understand what you believe and why you believe it, I'd like to take a few moments to talk about Christian history.



In doing so, please know that I have to generalize and oversimplify what is an incredibly complex subject to keep it to a few moments. In addition, every group feels like they are the one true church going back to the Apostles, or before, and that all others broke with them as illustrated by the Orthodox nonsense on this slide.



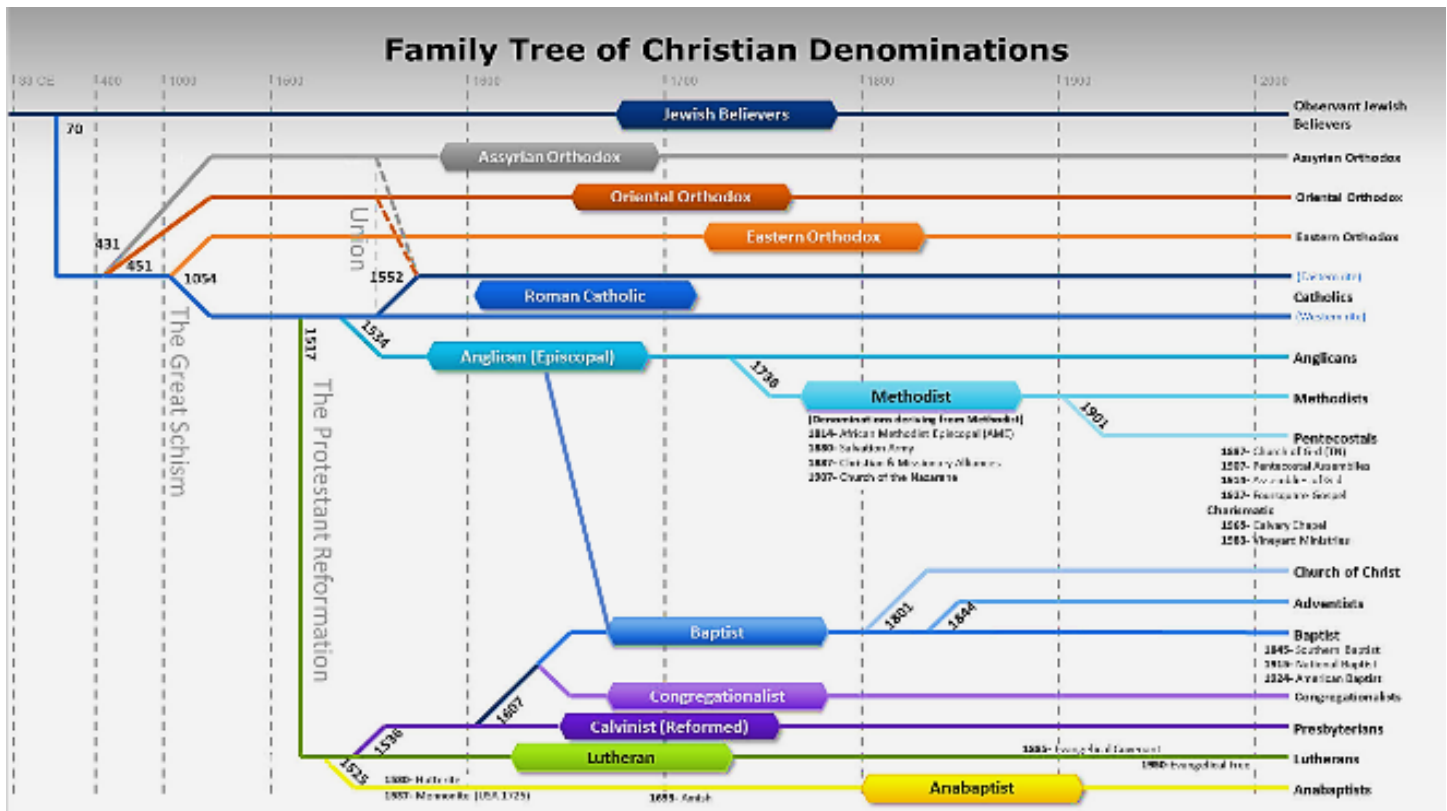
The Apostolic age went from roughly 30 to 100 A.D. when the last Apostle, John, the author of our Gospel, died. They were fishermen who became fishers of men. Sometimes I'm just checking to see if anyone's awake. Even during that time several heretical and blasphemous ideas circulated within and around the Christian community called the church. The Apostles combatted those schismatic views in a variety of ways including by written Gospels, doctrines, and other correspondence, that we now have as the New Testament Bible.



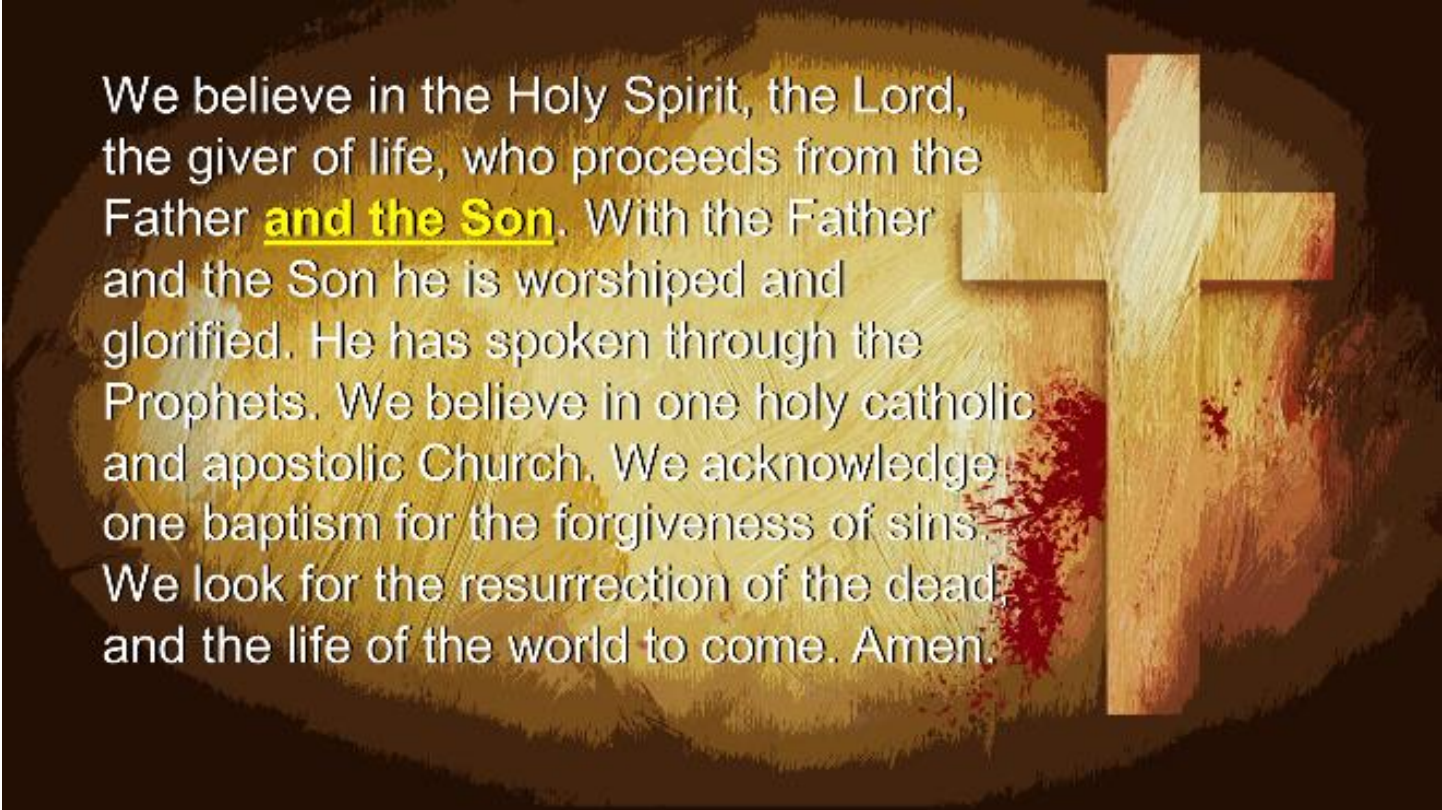
The Apostolic Fathers were the immediate successors to the Apostles. Men like Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, and Papias in that first generation lasting into the mid second century. Then we had the Ante-Nicene Fathers who were in the second, third and fourth generations active up until the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Men like Irenaeus, Justin, Tertullian, and Origen. Throughout the 300's A.D. there was an explosion of Early church Fathers. Men like Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ambrose, Hilary, Cyprian, and Gregory.

All of them battled for the Christian faith and as they did the Christian faith became more and more carefully defined. Boundaries were pushed and questions were

asked and as a result the questions were answered, and the boundaries were established. The Apostle's Creed gave way to the Nicene Creed, which gave way to minor changes in the Creed as things were further refined in order to combat heresies.



In 451, the Fourth Council of Chalcedon, formalized that Jesus had two natures, the divine and the human, within one person. That's much like the Trinity, separate but unified, not blended. Some folks disagreed saying that Jesus had only one nature that was a mixture of both divine and human. They separated as the Oriental Orthodox churches of primarily Armenia, Syria, Egypt, and Ethiopia.



We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father **and the Son**. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The remaining church was divided between East, or Greek and West, or Latin, or Roman. There were ongoing cultural, economic, and political tensions, as well as some technical issues over leavened and unleavened bread for Communion, when to celebrate Easter and biggest of all, what's called the filioque (fē-lē-ō-kwā). That's Latin for "proceeding from the Son." The earlier, agreed upon, Nicene Creed, stated that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father only. The Bishop of Rome wanted the "filioque" added to the Creed. That was the final straw and the Eastern, or Greek Orthodox churches bailed in what's called the Great Schism.

What's important about that is the reason the East wouldn't give in. They had knowingly or not, decided that tradition was the foundation of Christianity. To them the filioque could not be added because it was a break from tradition. For what was left of Christianity, namely the Western, or Latin, or Roman Catholics, the foundation for the faith was the church as it had always been in clarifying things throughout the first millennium.

To this day, Eastern Orthodoxy is unchanged as they vigorously hold on to tradition. Because their doctrine hasn't changed their undergirding theology hasn't either. They don't try to explain any of the questions modern people ask - they simply respond that it is a divine mystery.

Catholics, somewhere along the line, made a subtle overstep from clarifying the Apostolic teaching in the Bible to modifying, adapting, and altering the Apostolic teaching in the Bible. When that was pointed out, they responded, and still respond, that it is the Roman Catholic Church with its unbroken line of Papal succession going all the way back to Pope Peter that determines the Faith. That it is the Pope, representing the true church, who gives his authority to the Bible,

not the Bible that gives its authority to the Pope or the Church.



500 years ago, a Catholic monk and seminary professor named Martin Luther came up with 95 specific charges against the Catholic church. 95 things contrary to the Apostolic teaching in the Bible. His goal was to protest that this was not right and that it needed to change, which is to say the Church needed to reform.

Luther's protest for reform is called the Protestant Reformation. The Church responded predictably and tried to assassinate Luther. Due to a confluence of world events and philosophies the timing was right, and

many Catholics abandoned the Church in favor of a more Biblically centered faith. That idea that the foundation for Christianity is the Bible is the key difference between Protestants the other two great branches of Christianity.

The Orthodox remain unified because anything non-traditional is non-orthodox. Catholics also remain unified because anything not approved by the Church, is not Catholic. Protestants, on the other hand, with our justification being the Bible itself, have splintered into practically as many denominations as there are Protestant believers. It seems that not only can none of us agree on the correct interpretation of the Bible, we also insist that our interpretation is inspired, therefore those disagreeing, must either be bad Christians or not really be Christians at all. In either case, separation is necessary.



Two of the other big Reformers was a Swiss guy named Zwingli and a French dude named Calvin. They disagreed with Luther on Communion. The Catholic Church still believes that the elements turn into Jesus' actual body and blood through the authority of an ordained priest in what is called Transubstantiation. Zwingli and Calvin believed that it was Jesus' body and blood spiritually speaking, while Luther took a middle position called Consubstantiation. That little disagreement over the Communion elements led to the first Protestant division between Lutherans and Calvinists.

The Lutherans came in a couple of different flavors primarily due to geography and the Calvinists are Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, and simply Reformed. You've probably heard of Reformed Theology or Covenant Theology - remember these guys are the Theology nerds focusing on God the Father and His Sovereignty.

Neither of those groups went far enough for radical reformers who wanted to ditch tradition and the church almost entirely. They believed in a personal individual Christianity that was centered on the human being choosing to be a Christian and following Jesus. One of the most glaring differences was their belief that baptism was for a competent person freely deciding to undergo a Believer's Baptism, thus repudiating their Baptism as babies. In Switzerland they were called Anabaptists - meaning to be Baptized again. They are the Brethren denominations like the Amish, Hutterites, and Mennonites.

The English King Henry the VIII defended the Roman Catholic Faith against these reformers and in 1521 Pope Leo X conferred upon him the title "Defender of the Faith." Here's a fascinating fact: Leo was a very popular name for a Pope to take up until 1054 when

the Great Schism occurred under Pope Leo IX. For nearly 500 years no one wanted that name until our dude Leo X who presided over the second massive schism - the Protestant Reformation. Anyway, two years after Leo X gave the title to Henry VIII, he asked the Church for a divorce and when he was denied Henry divorced the Church declaring himself head of the Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church and the Episcopal Church. Yesterday, Charles was anointed King by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was declared the “Defender of the Faith,” by the grand poohbah of the Protestant Church of England, even though that title refers to defending the Roman Catholic faith. That’s called irony.

The Puritans arose in England just as the Anabaptists did on the continent. They were radical reformers and didn’t feel that Anglicanism went far enough. While the Puritans initially tried to reform the Church of England, other even more radical groups separated. One such group was the forerunner of modern Baptists.



The three big mainline Protestant denominations, the Lutherans, Presbyterians/Reformed, and Anglicans/Episcopalians, followed the lead of the Catholics and began building universities and hospitals. That increased the academic focus and a time of great scholasticism within Protestantism took hold. These churches became very scholarly and cerebral, which is to say Theologically and rationally driven, rather than experientially and emotionally driven. Another way to say that is the services were somewhat dead and boring to people just becoming aware that as a Protestant with a Biblical basis it didn't have to be that way. In addition, there was a continued concern that the Movement hadn't gone far enough.



He who has Christ has all he
needs and needs no more.

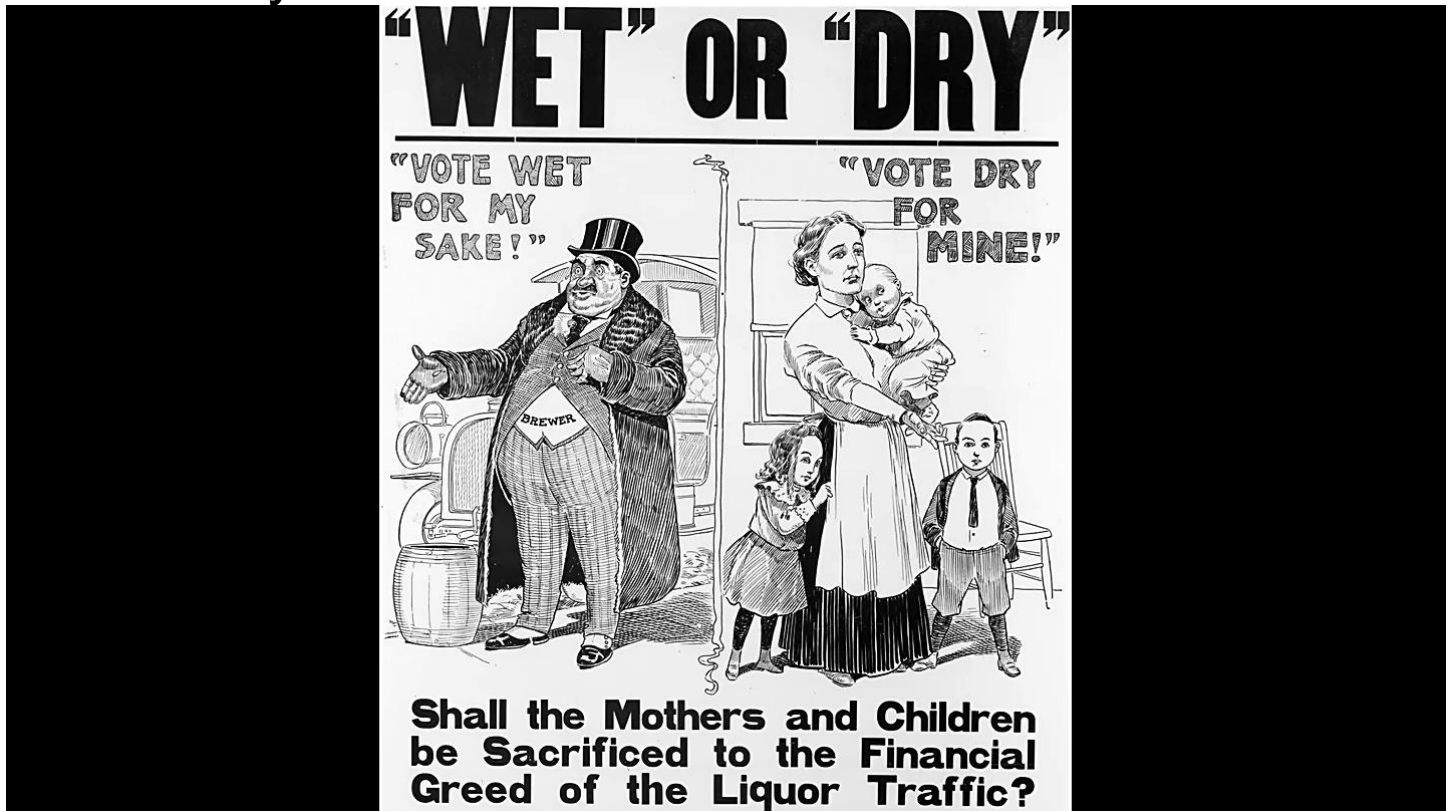
Jonathan Edwards

quote fancy

There was a backlash called the Piety Movement in roughly the mid 1700's that stressed personal piety or holiness primarily by taking ownership of one's faith. This led to the first Bible studies outside of the church. In England it led the Wesley brothers to create the Methodist Denomination, a methodology for being personally holy. In America, it was called the Great Awakening with fiery preaching by George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards. They often preached outdoors where unchurched and uneducated poverty-stricken people could hear the Gospel.

At the end of the 1700's and beginning of the 1800's there was the Second Great Awakening. This time it

was largely recognized that the piety movement and the Method of becoming pious had failed. What was to blame? The society around the Christian. What needed to happen was the culture needed to be reformed - Christianity had to take over.



This led to the Abolition and the Temperance Movements. Outlaw slavery and outlaw booze. That would be a good start towards a better environment for Christian piety. Well, both movements were largely conducted by females because the men were working. It didn't take the ladies long to realize that they could add to their volunteer work the Women's Movement.

The idea was that social justice including care for the poor would establish God's Kingdom on earth and make it far easier for Christians to live piously. It didn't work and so was born out of that, the Holiness Movement.



The Holiness Movement was the idea that what was needed in addition to social change was a second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian to enable holy living. This additional separate work created a greater focus on the Holy Spirit and with regular, fairly uneducated people taking a much greater role in their own Christian life, and the necessity to change society this all led to what's called Evangelical Christianity and an explosion of different denominations including the

Nazarenes, the Salvation Army, most of the Churches of God, and the whole swath of Pentecostal churches with the Assemblies of God being the largest.

Through the Second Great Awakening both the authority of the mainline churches and the value of Theological education were greatly diminished. Each individual could figure out their own personal relationship with God and that led to an explosion of new denominations, most of which are so heretical that they are full-blown cults and all of which, are theologically and doctrinally dangerous. The Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ, and the Seventh Day Adventists, to name a few.



These churches spawned by a more radical reformers stressed personal responsibility far more than the initial Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians and certainly far more than the Catholics. They had such a high view of the Bible and their individual faith that the church became more and more irrelevant. This is called low church. A church is a place where nothing any more special takes place than could take place anywhere else. A pastor is a person no more special than any other person. As a result, attending church is completely unnecessary to be a good Christian person. The main things that kept church attendance up initially were tradition and encouragement and fellowship. Oh, and that little verse in the Bible that says we are supposed to be in church.



Christians participated in church for what they could get out of it for their own walk, or their own wellbeing. In each successive generation, church becomes less and less important. Serving the church has been replaced by paying for church services. The church and pastors are just commodities. Only 4 out of every 10 adults in America who self-identify as Christians attend church once a week. Not long ago it was three times a week and now we are very lucky if it is three times a month.

All of that to say that the beliefs you hold dear are the result of all the generations before you. We are all products of the past and if we don't know our past, we

cannot understand our beliefs. Many years ago, a very elderly lady in the church admonished me to stop catering to modern people and get back to that old time religion by having Altar Calls. What she didn't know is that Altar Calls were invented in America in the 1830's and were absolutely unheard of for the 18 centuries prior to that.



My goal here today was to give a bit of background as to how we got here and to say that we at Alêtheia are trying to take the best of each branch of Christianity and leave what's unbiblical behind. As we move forward through the next few weeks it is my intention to help us gain a new appreciation for church and what Christ wants for and from His Bride.

the one who sees Me
sees Him who sent Me.



Back to our passage... Verse 45 is more than another way to say what was said in the previous verse. It means that to truly believe in Jesus, a person comes to see Him for Who He is - comes to recognize Jesus and know Jesus. Due to that, the same becomes true of seeing, recognizing, and knowing the Heavenly Father. Again, Christianity is all about our right-relationship with the One True God in His perfect Triunity.

Jesus exists as “The Light of the world” (John 8:12 & 9:5) and here, He reiterated what He had stated many times and, in many ways, and what was stated about Him in the prologue of this Gospel. John 1:4&5, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the

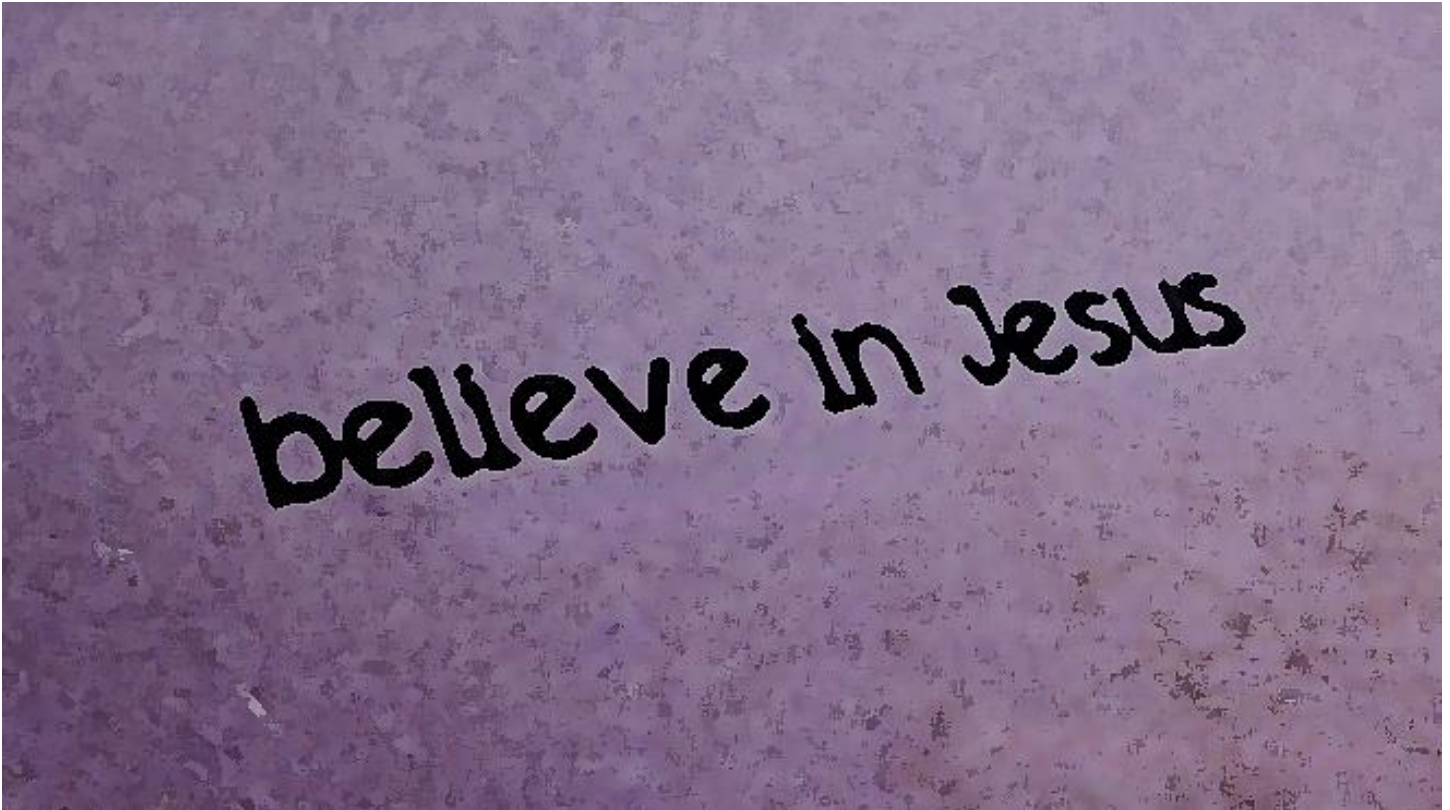
Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.” It is the Light that enables us to see - no one can see anything when there is no Light - that is the outer darkness.

As we’ve seen, the default position for all people is broken-relationship with our Creator that will last for all eternity, unless there is a reversal of our status. Such a path to right-relationship can only come from Him.



While He could condescend to reach down to us, we could never rise to reach up to Him - it has to be His plan, His way, His path illuminated by the Light of His His Word. Such a path, if followed all the way into the fullness of that guiding Light, would inevitably lead to

eternal Life. There is no judgment, no condemnation, no disapproval, in that - just Salvation, which is to say entire forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, and sanctification.

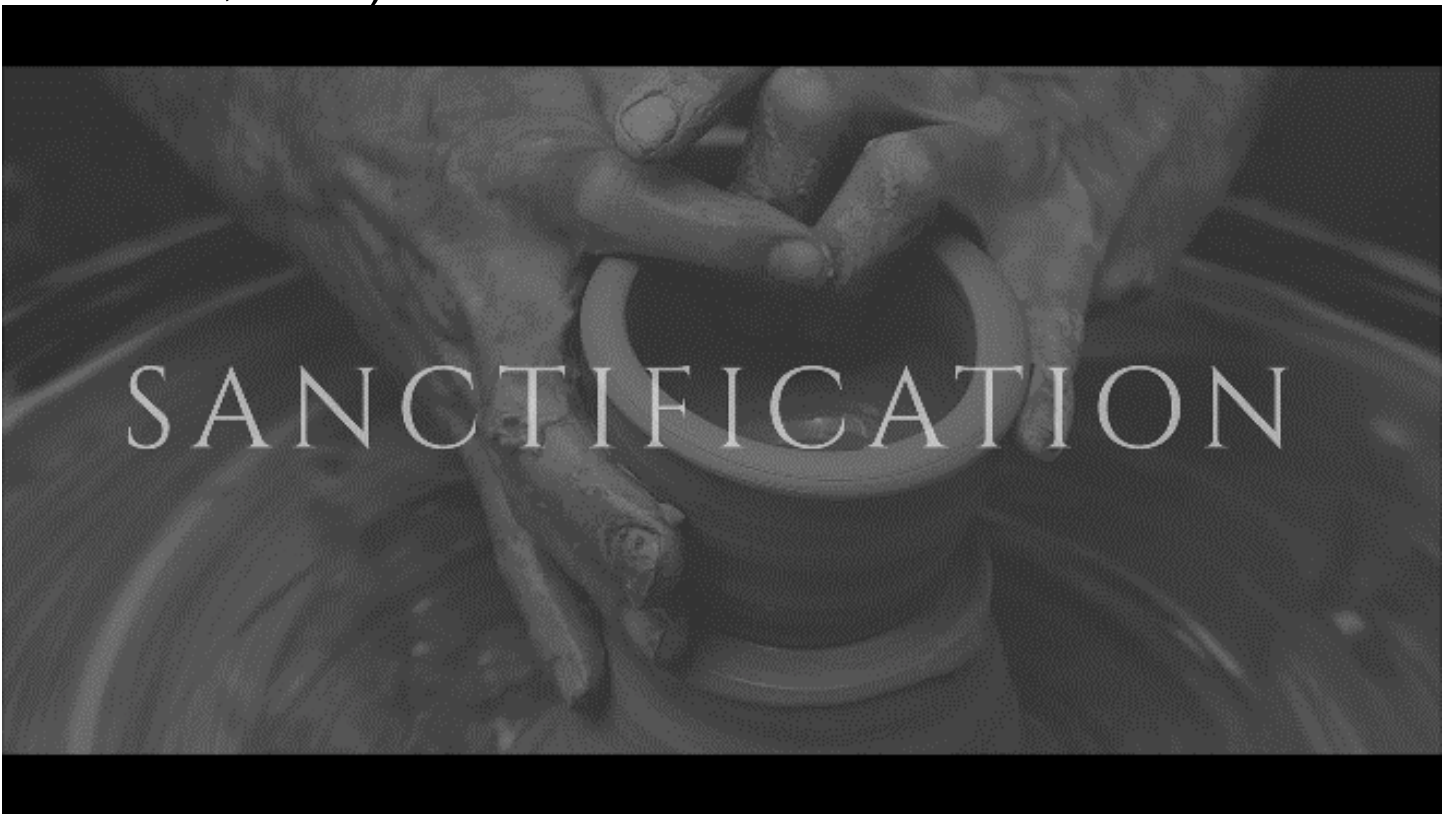


What is required to follow the Light on the path into eternal Life? Only believe in Jesus. There is absolutely nothing else. Not a better attitude, not more child-appropriate vocabulary, not good works, not attending church, not getting baptized, not taking Holy Communion - nothing else other than belief in Jesus.

Now, as Jesus Himself said, as the Bible itself declares, and as I have constantly taught, belief in Jesus entails, belief in Jesus. We can examine that as

the three-word phrase it is. What does it mean to “believe”? What does the word, “in,” actually indicate? Precisely Who is the “Jesus” we are to believe in?

The Creeds exist to define what “Belief in Jesus” means in order to be Salvific. Sort of the minimum acceptable understanding of what Jesus meant when He said to “Believe in Him unto eternal Life” (John 3:15&16, 5:24).



Now, here’s the bigger issue for us... Once Saved and Born Again and filled with the Holy Spirit, what is the minimum behavior to be a Christian? That’s part of what we will address next time. For today, ask yourself what is actually Christian? Will your faith be based

upon tradition, or the church, or the Bible, or with what resonates with you?

If the Bible, then what does the Bible actually require? Strip away all the stuff of tradition, the church and what you personally like and start with what is actually desired by God as taught by Jesus and recorded by His hand-selected Disciples.

We're going to work that angle as we continue in John's Gospel.