

What Do You Call a Christian? – Saint

Scripture Reading: Psalm 145:1-21

As we have already noted, words change meaning over the years. Sometimes they lose meaning through overuse. Sometimes they are mishandled, causing the true meanings to be corrupted or lost. The word “Christian” has been overused and mishandled over the years. It is the purpose of this study to regain its original and true meaning through the study of Biblical words and phrases.

The next term in our study is “Saint.”

The word “Saint” means “one who is holy and is separated for holy purposes.” Religion likes to use this term for special people who do (or did) great things, but Scripture shows us that this is God’s word to describe **all** His people. See I Samuel 2:9; Psalm 145:10-12.

Old Testament Saints

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were a separated people – people who were called out from among the other nations. Thus, they were called saints. See Psalm 132:1-9; 148:13-14; 149:1-2. However, from among the nation Israel, people were called to be a true saint – one who truly loved and trusted God and was not just going through the motions of citizenship in Israel. See Psalm 30:4; 31:19-24; 34:1-9; 37:1-11,22-28; 50:5 (note vs. 1-23); 52:1-9; 85:8 (note vs. 1-13); 89:7; 97:10; 116:15; 145:10 (note vs. 1-21).

New Testament Saints

This is much like the situation today, where people grow up in the church, or otherwise become church members, yet they are not truly saved / born again. In the New Testament, all those, from among all nations, who love, trust and follow Christ, the Son of God, are called “saints.” They have been separated from sin and the world, so that they now belong to God’s family and are sacred to Him. They are Holy to God.

Another word that describes this is “**sanctified**” (“to be set apart for God’s holy purposes”). We do not have to do extra special things to be a saint – just receive Christ.

Sanctification – A New Standing with God

The New Birth gives us a new life. At the moment we are born again, Christ sanctifies us by giving us a new position / standing with God. We are accepted by the Father because of Christ’s redemption.

Sanctification – A Progressive State in Our Relationship with God

Christ is also presently sanctifying us. This kind of sanctification is when the Lord develops that new life we were given, bringing us closer and closer to the likeness of Christ. God sanctifies us because of what Christ has done on the cross. God sanctifies us through the continuing work of Christ's Spirit and the Scriptures. God calls us to be His saints – His holy people – separated for His holy purposes.

This Gospel truth is much different than the various systems of legalism and ritualism of "Church-ianity". Instead of becoming holy through various lists of commandment-keeping and sacraments, the Gospel calls us to repent of vain religion and fleshly works and believe on Christ (Romans 3:19-24; 10:1-4; Galatians 3:21-22; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 6:1; 9:14). It is Christ who cleanses us and sanctifies us for a relationship in God's family and a working position in Christ's kingdom (Ephesians 4:1). It is Christ who has made us holy before God (our **standing**) and is working in us to be holy in heart, mind and behavior (our **state**).

See Proverbs 2:8; John 17:14-20; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Romans 1:6-7; 8:28-39; I Corinthians 1:1-3; 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:8-10,19 (note vs. 11-22); 5:25-27; I Thessalonians 4:7; 5:23; Hebrews 10:10,14; 13:20-21; I Peter 1:2-5,14-16; 2:5,9; 3:18; II Peter 1:1-4; 3:18; Jude 1:1.

Note the common usage of the word "saint" to describe Christ's disciples. See Acts 9:13,32; 26:10; Romans 1:6-7; 8:27; 12:10-**13**; 15:25,31; 16:1-**2**; I Corinthians 1:1-3; 6:1-2; 14:33; 16:1,15; II Corinthians 1:1; 8:4; 9:1,12; 13:13; Ephesians 1:15,18; 2:19; 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Philippians 1:1; 4:22; Colossians 1:1-4,12,26; I Thessalonians 3:13; II Thessalonians 1:10; I Timothy 5:10; Philemon 1:5,7; Hebrews 6:10; 13:24; Jude 1:3.

"All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious might of his kingdom."

Psalm 145:10-12