Forget About the President—Are YOU a Christian?

by Bryan Gibson

Is President Obama a Christian? That question has been hotly debated in recent months, and we don't intend to resolve it in this article. Let's forget about the President for a minute, and focus on another question, one much more relevant to you—are YOU a Christian?

Since the term "Christian" is used so broadly today, let's see if we can clarify the question—by first discussing what the question is not.

The question is not, "Are you a good person?" Obviously, a Christian ought to be a good person, but is that really enough? Cornelius was a very good person (Acts 10:1-2, 22), but he was not a Christian, at least not until he did what Peter commanded him to do (Acts 10:48).

The question is not, "Do you feel in your heart that you are a Christian?" Isn't it at least possible that you've been deceived, that what you feel in your heart may not actually be the case? "Whoever trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). If there was ever anything you needed to be absolutely certain about, this is it.

The question is not, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?" Obviously, this is essential to being a Christian, but the fact is, you can believe this and still be lost. Demons believe in Jesus (Matthew 8:28-29), but would anyone argue that they are saved? What about the rulers who believed in Jesus, but refused to confess him, "lest they be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42). Believing the gospel, including what it says about Jesus, is the beginning point, but what is ultimately required is obedience to the gospel (Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; 10:16; 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17).

Clearly, then, there are things you must DO to become a Christian. The people in Acts 2 certainly understood that ("Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—v. 37), and so did the Philippian jailer ("Sirs, what I must I do to be saved?"—Acts 16:31). So let's take our New Testament and see if we can find the answer to this extremely important question.

You must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that He indeed died for your sins and rose again (John 3:16; 8:24; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). No argument here, right, for how can one be saved without believing in the Savior, or become a Christian without believing in the Christ?

But what about repentance? Didn't Jesus make it equally clear that one must repent of his sins? "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). That's the very thing Peter commanded his listeners to do, in both Acts 2:38 and 3:19. Becoming a Christian involves turning to the Lord (Acts 9:35; 11:21), but you can't turn TO Him until you've turned FROM sin (Acts 3:26; 26:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Remember the rulers who refused to confess Jesus (John 12:42)? You must be willing to do that, just like the Ethiopian treasurer did (Acts 8:37). "…if you confess with your mouth the

Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

We're getting closer, but we're not there yet. Would you agree that one cannot become a Christian until he has put on Christ, until he has entered into Christ, until he has been united with or joined with Christ? But at what point does that take place? "For as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27; see also Romans 6:3-5). Despite what you may have heard, you must be baptized in water to be saved—to become a Christian. And if you still have any doubts about that, please read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.

And so here's the question you need to ask yourself: Have I taken the necessary steps to become a Christian? If not, please do not delay. Obey the gospel before this day is over, because it just may be the last opportunity you'll ever have.