

Who are the “saints,” and who determines whether someone is a “saint”?

The World Book Encyclopedia identifies the thinking of many people about the subject of “sainthood.” A “saint” it says, “is a person who is canonized, or declared to be the lawful object of public veneration, as being in heaven with God.” The tradition of “beatification,” it goes on to say, “confers the title ‘blessed’ on a person, after it is determined a person lived an extremely virtuous life or died a martyr and proof of two to four miracles are manifest through this person.”

How do these traditions compare to the Word of God? Some traditions are commendable in that they encourage faithfulness to God. Other traditions, however, seem to contradict plain Bible teaching, or at least give people a false impression about certain Biblical topics. Jesus warns us to be on guard against such human traditions (Matt 15:1-20).

The Bible is replete with references to the “saints.” Look up these passages for yourself and check their context.

Psalm 106:16— Aaron, the brother of Moses, is called “the saint of the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 33:2-3— The children of Israel, at Sinai, are called “His saints.” God loved them as they sat at His feet and received His words.

Psalm 89:7— The Psalmist announced “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him.”

Psalm 116:15— “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

These and many other Old Testament passages prove the words “saint” or “saints” to refer to God’s people both great and small. In addition, there are more than sixty references to “saints” in the New Testament. Follow these references in your own Bible:

1 Corinthians 1:2— “Paul...to the church of God at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints....”

Ephesians 2:19— Speaking to Gentile Christians, Paul said, “you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God....”

The apostle confirms that being a “saint” is coequal to being a faithful member of God’s house, i.e., a Christian. The word translated literally means *set apart, separate and holy*. The apostle Peter exhorts all Christians to be “holy in all your conduct...as He who called you is holy” (1 Pet 1:15-16).

There is not a single reference in the New Testament of a Christian being selected and endowed with a title of distinction above other Christians. It is also interesting to note that every time the Greek word for “saint” is used by the apostles it is in its plural form, indicating that every Christian is on equal footing in the sight of God.

When men try to determine who can and cannot be a “saint,” they put themselves in the place of God (2 Thess 2:4), and they mislead people into thinking that only extraordinarily gifted people have a right to this name.

Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God and it is He Who paid the price to become the Savior of mankind (1 Pet 1:17-21; 2:21-25). God, the Father, is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).” No person on earth can save and justify another person. That matter is in God’s hands. However, we can direct you to the Source of salvation and justification.

If you desire to become a “saint,” **open your heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ** (Rom 1:16; 10:17); **believe Him to be the Son of God** (John 8:24; Rom 10:9); **repent and turn your life in His direction** (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:3:19; 17:30); **confess Him as the Lord of all** (Rom 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-37); **and be immersed in water for the remission of your sins** (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21). In obedience to God, **HE** will wash, sanctify and justify you (1 Cor 6:11). In short, **HE** will make you a “saint.”

Study your Bible and search the Truth. Thanks for reading!

~ C. Boyd Jennings