

What Is A Christian?

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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

- [0:00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture we read. And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate on the last clause in verse 26.
- ! For a whole year, they met with the church and taught a great many people.
- And in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. And in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians.
- It's very helpful to realize that Christians did not give themselves the name Christians.
- It was actually the world that gave the name Christian to disciples. It wasn't themselves.
- [1:25] And that's the same with nicknames today. It's other people that give you the name. And in Antioch was the place where they were first called Christians.
- Several things amaze me about that. Number one, as far as I know, and I'm open to correction, but as far as I know, Christ was never in Antioch.
- And in Antioch was the first time people, disciples, were called Christians. And Christ was never there. What does that teach you? The second thing that amazes me is that Christ was dead.
- He had left this earth for 10 years before anyone was called a Christian. What does that teach us? He left a heritage.
- He left a heritage. A heritage worth following. But there's something else you ought to remember too.
- [2:33] The word Christian then was a derogatory term. You remember King Agrippa? You're not going to persuade me to become a Christian, are you?
- It was a despised term. Oh, Christians. Them. The world gave the name Christian.
- The world noticed things about them. What did the world notice about Christians?
- They were different. Very different from normal people in this world. They weren't interested in popularity.
- They weren't interested in popularity. Obviously. Very obviously. Because they weren't popular. They didn't seem interested in money and prosperity like other people were.
- [3:38] They noted. They noted. They weren't interested in becoming celebrities. Fame and honor. They weren't after that.
- They were different. They were different. These people they called Christians. They had a peace about them that the world just couldn't explain.
- And they had a joy about them that the world did not have. The world noted they were different. The world noted they were committed to a certain lifestyle.
- They had principles and standards and values and allegiances. And they were very, very committed to that. They weren't wishy-washy.
- They knew what they believed. And they were prepared to suffer for it. And of course, as you know, many of them lost their lives because of their allegiance to Christ.

- [4 : 49] They also noted that these things, that these people, these disciples, they had been changed. They'd been transformed from what they once were.
- They weren't born like that. If you like, they weren't natural. They were good, but they weren't natural. Something happened that changed their lives.
- Changed their natures. They were transformed. They were converted, of course. And even to this day, people hate this conversion.
- And there was a big campaign, as you know, against conversion therapy. They don't like it. It's way back. Thousands of years it started.
- But most of all, the most important thing the world noted about these Christians, what their changed lifestyle was all to do with a relationship that they had with a person.
- [5 : 53] And that person, of course, was Christ. People sometimes think Christianity is about adhering to a certain set of rules and regulations.
- Being committed to a system. Well, there is a set of rules involved. But that's not Christianity. It's a relationship to Christ.
- To God's Son. To Jesus. And it was disciples of Jesus that were first called Christians.
- A disciple is a learner. Someone who learns from Jesus. And a Christian they saw said, Well, I wonder what Jesus would say about that.
- They learned from Jesus. They followed Jesus. And most of all, they stuck with Jesus.
- [7 : 06] So, we ask the question, What is a true Christian? How can you tell a true Christian?
- A Christian is not someone who, simply someone who is not a Hindu or a Sikh or a Muslim or a Buddhist.
- It's not simply that. A Christian believes certain things. A Christian feels certain things.
- A Christian chooses voluntarily certain things. A Christian does certain things.
- But of course, so do all religious people. So does the Buddhists. They burn themselves to death. For allegiance to what Buddha said.
- [8 : 13] So, what makes the difference about a Christian? Does certain things. Chooses certain things. Loves certain things. Feels certain things.
- Believes certain things. What is different about a Christian? About the Christian religion? Answer.
- They have their lifestyle. Their belief system. Their choices. All because they have a Savior who paid for their sins at the place called Calvary.
- That's what makes the difference. They have a Savior who died for them. And everything they've ever done wrong is forgiven.
- Forever. Forever. They have forgiveness and peace with God.
- [9 : 24] Forever. Permanently. They actually stand. Christians. If you're listening to me and don't know what a Christian is.
- A Christian actually stands on a penalty free zone. Nothing he ever does wrong will be brought up against him.
- That's a tremendous blessing. That's a tremendous blessing. Nothing he ever does wrong will be brought up against him.
- Everything he does wrong will be forgiven. That's a Christian. Christ, when he forgives someone, he forgives them all their sins.
- Past. Present. And yes. Future. Tremendous thing to be a Christian. How did they get it?

- [10:36] How did they get this blessedness of permanent forgiveness of sin? And a guarantee of heaven.
- I always remember speaking to. Well, my. I can't remember. Was he a Mormon or was he a Jehovah Witness? But I do remember he actually listened to us.
- And he says, well, he says, I have a couple of complaints. A couple of things I don't agree with you. He says. And he says, the main thing is.
- Well, one of them was. You can't be. You can't be converted suddenly. It's a process. You've got to learn and practice. And just practice it. And the other thing.
- That I meant to say was this. He says. If I go out there. And that bus goes over me. He says. I don't know whether I'll be in heaven or not.
- [11:31] I don't know if I'm one of that. One of that 144,000 lucky ones. But he says, you. You said if you went out there and were killed. You'd go straight to heaven.
- I says, yeah. Christ guarantees you that in the gospel. If you truly believe in him. How do you get that blessing?
- From Christ. Repentance and faith. Two things. Repentance and faith. You got it?
- In verse 18. They glorified God. Saying then to the Gentiles also. God has granted repentance.
- That leads to life. Repentance to life. You see. The problem here was the Jews. Not being able to accept. That anyone.
- [12:28] Now. That Christ has resurrected from the dead. Anyone. Just by repenting of his past. And believing in Christ. Guaranteed a place in heaven.
- They didn't like the idea that. Yeah. He didn't have to have a lifestyle of. Practicing a ritual. Of the Jewish religion. Repentance.
- And faith in Christ. And faith in Christ. That's how you get this. That's how you become a Christian. Verse 18. Repentance. The Gentiles.
- God granted them repentance. That leads to life. The Holy Spirit. Can give anyone. Anywhere. Anytime. Repentance for sin.
- If you ask him. And mean it. If you ask him. And mean it. When you mention repentance.
- [13:24] It's repentance. You say. From what? From sin. Ah. But you say. I live a good life. I'm done. I try to keep all the commandments.
- And I'm not bad. I'm not as bad as these murderers. And rapists. And what have you. But you see. Sin is anything. Against God. Anything.
- In fact. It's actually more than that. It's actually. Disagreeing with God. Eh?
- God is an absolute being. Absolute. Therefore. He requires. Absolute. Perfection.
- And you and I. Can't do it. You see. I could be keeping. All the commandments. Doing everything right. And then I get cancer.
- [14:26] I'm not happy with God. Disappointing. I'm angry with him. That's sin. God's an absolute being. He requires.
- Absolute. Perfection. And I can't. Give it. And neither can you. But the spirit can convict you of that. But you know.
- It's possible to be convicted of sin. And rebel. And say. Don't believe it. Don't want it. Don't want to hear about it again. And there's evidence in the Bible.
- People did that. We have repentance. As acknowledging sin. Hating it. Turning from it.

Fighting against it. Repenting of sin. Turning against it. Fighting against it. There has to be the genuine desire.

[15:27] The serious attempt to stop it. But the Christian. In this world. In this world. Will never reach the point. Of being sinless.

Will never be completely free. From the presence of sin. In this world. But we must have a genuine desire. And make a serious attempt.

To fight against it. And also. To believe. That we're forgiven. If we believe. You see. It's repentance.

That leads to life. It's not repentance. That leads to despair. Some people think. That before. I have to be convinced of sin.

So that I despair. You know. It's. Repentance to life. Repentance. That makes you change your ways. It makes you fight against sin.

[16:29] There's no. Genuine. Repentance. Of sin. Unless you have also. The second feature. Trusting. Faith.

In Christ. Verses 17. And 21. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 21. They believed.

And turned. To the Lord. Salvation. Isn't a negative thing. You know. In electricity. You need two wires. A positive. And a negative.

If you've only got one wire. There's no. No power. Same in religion. If you've only got repentance. And no faith. And no faith.

In Christ. You're not saved. However severe the repentance. However severe the repentance is. Without faith. It is utterly impossible.

[17:26] To please God. As Jesus Christ himself said. If you believe not that I am he. You will die in your sins.

However much conviction you may have. If you don't believe in me. You'll die in your sins. Some people have conviction of sin.

And they go into monasteries. And they go into convents. And they turn to idols. And they worship false deities and gods. No, no.

Repentance unto life. Your conviction of sin must lead you to pardon in Christ. And we might ask. At what point.

At what precise point. Does one become a Christian. At what point. My answer is. The moment. You depend on Christ.

[18:25] For pardon. That's the point. When you become a Christian. So. Salvation.

Is all wrapped up. In your relationship to Christ. Because the moment. We truly believe in him. We're joined to him. United to him.

Is a biblical term. It's interesting. The Bible only uses the word. Christian. Three times. The whole Bible. Only uses it.

Three times. The term the Bible uses. For a Christian. Is. If any man be. In. Christ. Jesus. It's over 70 times.

Defined. The Christian is defined. As. Being a Christian. In. Christ. Jesus. Christ. That's the most popular term.

[19:26] Salvation. Is all. Wrapped up. In a relationship. With Jesus. Trusting.

In Jesus. Not just about him. Very few. Very few. Intelligent. Educated. People. Don't believe. Believe. Don't believe.

About Jesus. Of course. People believe. He did. The evidence is too strong. Of course. He did. What they don't believe. Is. He can save them. For their sins. What they don't believe.

Is that he died. For them. Salvation. Is believing. Christ. Died. For sinners. All kinds. And you're a sinner.

And I'm a sinner. Doesn't matter. What kind. Christ. Died. For sinners. And I'm one of them. Can you do that? That is.

[20:22] Trusting. In Christ. We've. Keir Starmer. As a prime minister. You believe. About him. We all believe.

About him. But I. Question. If we all. Believe. In him. See the difference? People. Intelligent. People. Believe about Jesus.

But do they. Believe. In him. On him. Trusting him. Following his policies. Believing. He's got the right. Everything he says. Is true. Trust.

In Christ. Love. For. Christ. Obedience. To. Christ. To. Christ. That's.

The three things. That's. Effectual. Believing. And. Just. Simply. Believing. About. Jesus. You have.

[21:21] Trust. In him. You have. Love. For him. And you have. Obedience. To him. So. You have. So. These two things.

Repentance. And faith. Is how. You have. Christ. As your savior. With a guarantee. Of heaven. Standing.

On a penalty. Free zone. Immune. Immune. From. God's. Condemnation. Amazing.

Christ. Can. Make you. Immune. From. Condemnation. From God. Now listen. We. Christians. Grieve.

God. We. Grieve. Him. But. He doesn't. Condemn. Us. Christ. Took. All. Our. Punishment. He.

[22:18] Will. Chastise. Us. When we. Go. Off. Stray. He. Will. Bring. Us. Back. And. Sometimes. He. Used to. Give. Us. Hardship. To. Bring. Us. Back.

But. He. Paid. All. The. Punishment. There's. No. Punishment. Ever. That's. The. Salvation. Christ. Died. To. Procure. For.

You. And. Me. If. We. Believe. Upon. Him. Now. We. Might. Ask. How. Did. How. Did. It. All. Begin. How. Did. This. Repentance. And. Faith.

All. Begin. Well. We're. Told. In. Verse. One. Of. Our. Chapter. The. Gentiles. It. Was. All. About. How. Come.

These. People. That. Never. Had. Anything. To. With. Religion. Before. How. Come. They're. Now. Christians. And. We've. Been. Struggling. Keeping. The. Law. All. These. Times. And. Not. Being. Christians. There.

[23:12] Was. This. Problem. With. The. Gentiles. Becoming. Christians. But. See. What. It. Says. Here. When. The. Apostles. And. The. Brothers. Who. Were. Throughout. Judea. Heard. That. The. Gentiles. Also. Had.

What. Received. The. Word. Of. God. That's. How. It. And.

We. Can. Say. Secondly. They. Met. With. The. Church. That's. How. It. All. Began. Actually. Verse. 26. Our. Text. They. Met. A. Whole. Year.

They. Met. With. The. Church. You. See. It's. All. Very. Well. To. Say. I. Believe. In. Jesus. But. Tell. Me. Where. Do. You. Get. Accurate.

- Information. About. Jesus. You. Want. To. Believe. In. Jesus. I. Want. To. Believe. In. The. Real. Jesus. Where. Do. I. Get. The. Real. Message. About. Jesus. You.
- [24:10] Get. It. From. The. Word. Get. It. From. Heaven. Where. Jesus. Came. To. Us. From. You. Get. It. From. The. Word. You.
- Have. The. Only. Accurate. Reliable. Trustworthy. Life. Saving. Information. We. Get. Is. Divine. From.
- Heaven. And. We've. Got. A. Version. Of. It. In. The. Word. Of. God. You. Don't. Get. It. From. Oh. I. Like. To. Think. Of. God. Like.
- This. No. No. What. Has. God. Revealed. About. Himself. That's. What's. True. That's. What's. Accurate. That's. What's. Important. You.
- Can. Only. Get. Reliable. Information. From. Heaven. And. That's. Why. Christ. Jesus. Is. Called. He's. Called. The. Word. Made. Flesh.
- [25:05] The. Word. Became. Flesh. You. See. There's. Such. A. Difference. Between. You. And. Me. Living. In. This. World. Here. And. God.
- In. Heaven. There's. Such. A. Gulf. We. Need. Something. In. Between. To. Identify. With. Jesus. To. Speak. Reverently. Is.
- The. Understandable. Version. Of. God. The. Human. Version. Of. God. If. You. Like. Helps. Us. Understand. What. God. Is.
- Like. Well. What. Did. Jesus. Do. What. Did. Jesus. Say. What. Did. Jesus. Think. Well. Jesus. Is.
- The. Word. Made. Flesh. We. Don't. Have. Jesus. In. The. Next. Village. To. Go. Along. And. Find. Ask. Them. A. Question. But. Jesus. Is.
- [25:57] The. Word. Made. Fresh. We've. Got. The. Word. We've. Actually. Got. More. Help. Than. Peter. James. And. John. Had. Jesus.
- Said. About. The. Bible. Printers. Of. The. Day. They. Were. The. Scribes. They. Were. Full. Time. They. Spent.
- The. Time. Writing. Out. The. Bible. Word. For. Word. The. Scribes. And. He. Said. He. He. Condemned. Them. He. Said. These.
- Are. They. What. They. Were. Doing. Spoke. About. Him. But. They. Would. Not. Come. To. Him. That. They. Might. Have. Life. He. Said. They. The.
- Word. The. Scriptures. They. Bear. Witness. About. Me. And. He. Said. On. Another. Different. Occasion. Whoever.
- [26:53] Is. Ashamed. Of. Me. And. My. Words. And. My. Words. We. Mustn't. Be. Ashamed. Of. The. Bible.
- The. Bible. Is. Jesus. Is. The. Bible. Enfleshed. Human. Terms. We. Haven't. Jesus. To. Go. Along. And. Ask. A. Question. We. Can. Ask. Him.
- In. Heaven. Of. Of. Course. But. We. Have. Got. It. All. Here. In. Writing. That. Is. How. It. Began. With. Them. So. For. Someone. To. Say. Oh.
- I. I. I. I. I. I. I. I. is a contradiction in terms. Because Jesus is the Word become human flesh.
- It's a contradiction in terms to say, I'm all for Jesus, but I'm not for the Bible. It's also a contradiction, by the way, to say, I'm all for Jesus, but I've no time for the church.
- [27:53] It's in the church that the Holy Spirit has deposited. The Word of God. And as we read there in our text, for a whole year they met with the church.

We're asking, how did it begin? It began with them receiving the Word of God as not the Word of men, but the Word of God from heaven.

And where did they hear the Word of God? They heard it in the church. They met with the church for a year. And again, you get people saying, no, I'm all for Jesus, but I've no time for the church.

Do you know what you've done? People who say, I'm all for Jesus, but I've no time for the church. Do you know what you've done when you say that? You've decapitated Christ.

Christ is the head. The church is the body. And if you say, I have no time for the church, you've decapitated Christ. Very solemn.

[28:59] Very solemn. And you have it there. You see, Christianity is more than a philosophy about God. It's a community who worship God.

People who gather together to worship God. And churches for me to meet God. I'm not against live streaming.

I'm all for it, no way. But if it stops you coming to meet with God in his house, that's serious. Christianity is about more than individual salvation.

It's about a fraternity that turned the world upside down. And it can do the same again. In fact, it is doing the same again.

Turning the world upside down. You know, there's a hundred million copies of this book being printed every year. Approximately.

[30:09] A hundred million. After, what, two centuries? Well, one final thing. Just to ask, Is there a short, succinct mark we can give of the genuine Christian believer?

I would put it this way. The Christian, the true Christian, is continually repenting and confessing his sin.

Plus, plus, constantly believing he's forgiven upon confession of that sin.

You don't have to keep on confessing the same old sin you committed years ago. The Bible says categorically, if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Do you believe that? Or do you not? If we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[31:31] May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth, effectual to every one of us.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Amen.