

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

The designation "Christian" is used three times in the New Testament to describe the people of God (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). Questions with eternal implications are, Who is a Christian? How do you identify a Christian? What characteristics does a Christian possess? Is it possible to determine who is a Christian? There are several answers given to these questions.

THE WORLD'S DEFINITION

The world usually defines a Christian as, "A person who believes in God," "A person who believes in Jesus Christ," "A good person," "One who is kind and loving," "A person who does good works" or "A religious person."

THE DICTIONARY DEFINITION

The dictionary defines Christian as, *One who believes or professes or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him: an adherent of Christianity: one who has accepted the Christian religious and moral principles of life: one who has faith in and has pledged allegiance to God, thought of as revealed in Christ: one whose life is conformed to the doctrines of Christ (in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians - Acts 11:26).*

While these definitions may serve to identify who man considers to be a Christian, a more authoritative description is provided by the Word of God.

BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN

According to the Bible a Christian is a forgiven sinner. Sin enters the life of an individual when he/she violates or disobeys God's instructions (1 John 3:4). The apostle Paul pointed out to the church in Rome, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The results or payday for sin is also stated by Paul later in the same book. "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Death is separation and the sinner will be separated from God eternally (Matthew 25:46).

Because of God's grace, mercy and love he sent His only begotten son into the world to provide salvation for those who were separated from him by their sin (Isaiah 59:1-2; John 3:16; John 1:29). Man's sin can only be removed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:22,

Hebrews 9:14, 24-26; 10:12; Revelation 1:5).

Please keep in mind that we have under consideration the teachings of God's Word concerning how one becomes a Christian. When the believing (John 8:24), penitent (Luke 13:3), confessing (Matthew 10:32-33), sinner is baptized into the death of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-4), he/she contacts the blood of Jesus Christ which he shed at his death (John 19:34; Romans 6:3) and is cleansed from all sins (Acts 2:38).

Being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ the child of God is added, by God, to the church which is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18). This action is illustrated in the obedience of the great multitude in Acts 2.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached - Acts 2:22-36.
The audience was convinced of sin - Acts 2:36.
They asked what they must do - Acts 2:37.
They were instructed - Acts 2:38.
They obeyed - Acts 2:41.
God added them to the church - Acts 2:47.
It is the church, the spiritual body of Jesus Christ,
that God has promised to save - Ephesians 5:23.

Jesus Christ clearly sets forth what man must do to obtain remission of sins.

Believe in Him - John 8:24.
Repent of sins - Luke 13:3.
Confess Him as God's son - Matthew 10:32-33.
Be baptized - Mark 16:16.

A CHRISTIAN IS A SERVANT OF GOD

Paul describes himself as a servant of God (Titus 1:1), a servant of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1), and describes the mission of a servant of Jesus Christ in a very clear manner in his letter to the Philippians, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21) and to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). Jesus taught his apostles that the servant is to serve the master (Luke 17:7-10).

God expects many things of His servants. He expects them to:

1. Love - John 14:15; Matthew 22:35-40; John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:43-48; James 2:8.
2. Live a pure life - Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

- a. Separate from the world (society) - 1 John 2:15; James 4:17.
- b. Refrain from the works of unrighteousness - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- c. Abstain from the works of the flesh - Galatians 5:19-21.

A CHRISTIAN IS A WORSHIPPER

The Christian is a worshipper of the one true God, the Jehovah God of the Bible (Matthew 4:10). This worship is to be directed to God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Worshipping God in spirit is to worship from the heart or inner man and to worship God in truth is to worship Him according to His word (John 17:17). When man worships God in a way to fulfill his own desires, that worship is vain (Matthew 15:7-9).

The importance of worship becomes evident when we realize that in worship God is honored, revered, adored, glorified, and praised. The Bible states, "Holy and reverend is His name" (Psalms 111:9). The word *reverend* teaches us that God is worthy of worship. Also in the very act of worshipping God Christians also teach and encourage each other (Colossians 3:16) in the Christian life.

Worship is so important that the inspired penman of the book of Hebrews admonishes Christians not to forsake the worship assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

A CHRISTIAN HELPS THOSE IN NEED

One of the outstanding characteristics of a Christian is the love which is an integral part of his life. His love for God is evident by his obedience (John 14:15), his love for all mankind is manifested by his willingness to teach them the saving gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15). A further manifestation of the Christian's love is seen in his helping those who are in need.

The Christian assists those who are in physical need, (Galatians 6:10; James 1:27). A Biblical example of this fact is observed in many passages of scripture (Acts 2:44-45; 4:36-37; Romans 15:26-29; 2 Corinthians 9:12-15).

The Christian also assists fellow Christians who have a spiritual need (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1).

A CHRISTIAN TEACHES OTHERS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The greatest love which can be shown to mankind is to teach him the saving gospel (Romans 1:16) of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15). The gospel can be taught one-on-one (Acts 8:26), house to house (Acts 20:28), in public places (Acts 17:19), in a religious gathering (Acts 19:8), in a school room setting (Acts