

What have we seen so far

The results testify to the power of the gospel message

- The spread of Christianity has had more influence on the world than any other cultural change
- No other world religion has spread so far so quickly without military aid
- The concept of “Christianity” as a religion emerged
- Today, close to 80 percent of Americans consider themselves “Christian”



Is this what Jesus had in mind?

- Do Christians really live that differently from anyone else?
- Was following Christ ever expected to be something that was “mainstream?”
- The American phenomenon of “Cultural Christianity” – it can mean anything to anyone
- Who decides if I’m a Christian? I do!
- The image of what a follower of Christ really looks like has become more unclear

What does the term “Christian” even mean?



How would you define the word “Christian?”

- Someone who is saved?
- Someone who has obeyed the gospel?
- Someone who belongs to a particular religious group?
- Someone who believes the “right” doctrine?
- Someone who “claims” Christianity as their philosophy?
- Someone who believes in Jesus?
- Someone who goes to church regularly?



A new name for God's people

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; **that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.**” - Isaiah 61:1-3



A new covenant for God's people

“I will faithfully give them their recompense, **and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.** Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; **all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.** I (Zion/Israel) will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” - V. 8-10



A new name for the holy city

“For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, **and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.** You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate , **but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married;** for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.” - Isaiah 62:1-4



**Nations
flowing to
the city to
learn of
God (2:1-4)**

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.”
And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.” - V. 10-12

It's not about the name... it's about who we are to God, and how we live in the world



“They were called Christians first in Antioch”

- Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)
 - People who believed the Gospel message and turned (repented) to the Lord
 - They were told to “remain faithful with a steadfast purpose”
 - They were students of the word of God
 - Their lives were such that people could identify them enough to call them “Christian”, or “Christ-like”
- Paul and Agrippa (Acts 26)
 - Believed the promises of the redemption of God’s people through the resurrection
 - Turned from darkness to light, received forgiveness and a place among the sanctified
 - Performed deeds in keeping with repentance
- Peter (1 Peter 4:13-16)
 - Joyfully willing to undergo persecution and hardship in the name of Jesus



**The pattern
from Isaiah
to the NT:
What do
Christians
look like?**

You will be a sanctified people to God

You will turn from darkness to light

You will strive to learn and grow in
Christ

You will be recognizable as belonging
to the Lord!



An open book with aged, yellowed pages lies flat on a dark, textured wooden floor. The background is a wall of vertical dark wood planks with visible grain and knots. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the wood and the edges of the book.

Am I a “Christian?” or a
Disciple?

Jesus' call to become disciples

- Jesus didn't say "be a Christian," he said "follow the Christ" - Mtt. 24:25
- "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them** to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:19-20
- The idea of disciple implies learning, modeling, following
- Can I be a Christian or a disciple, if I don't know the Lord? If I'm not learning from him? If I'm not growing more like him?
- The irony that "Christianity" has become the very thing Paul warned the Jews about: a sense of inherited entitlement!



Can I just be a “Christian” and not be a “disciple?”

- Not all who “followed” Jesus was a disciple! John 6:14-15, 22-26
- Requires sacrifice, Luke 14:25-28
- Requires perseverance, v. 30
- Requires a bond with other disciples, Matt. 10:42
- Disciples reflect the master, Matthew 10:24-25
- Being a “disciple” isn’t optional if you want to have a relationship with Jesus, Mark 8:34-37
 - “I don’t have to be a saint!”



A disciple of Christ:

- Is baptized by the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19
- Is taught to observe the commandments of Jesus, v. 20
- Is willing to forsake whatever is needed in order to follow Jesus, Matthew 19:27, Phil. 3:7-11
- Is identifiable by his love for other Christians, John 13:34-35
- Is identifiable by reflecting the character of the master
 - Why were they called Christians in Antioch? Because they looked like Christ!



Is a Christian...

- Someone who has obeyed the gospel? – Christians obey the gospel, but being a Christian is about who I serve, not what I did
- Someone who belongs to a religion? – Jesus didn't call groups. He called you and me.
- Someone who believes the “right” doctrine? – A Christian follows the teaching of the Christ, but Christian faith is never defined as faith in a set of ideas
- Someone who “claims” Christianity? – Can I be a disciple without submitting to a master?
- Someone who believes in Jesus? – Not a scriptural definition – obviously you can't follow Jesus without believing!
- Someone who goes to church regularly? – Following Christ is not a “weekend job”
- Someone who is saved? – Christians are saved, but that's not who they are or how they're identified

Salvation isn't the end, it's the means of fulfilling our purpose

- “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**” - 1 Peter 2:9
- “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones **are being built up as a spiritual house,** to be a holy priesthood, **to offer spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” - 1 Peter 2:2-5
- “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,** which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind,** that by testing you may **discern what is the will of God,** what is good and acceptable and perfect.” - Romans 12:1-2

What does it really mean to be a Christian

The message of the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8)

- Will we be emotional and excited and zealous until things get difficult?
- Will we settle into our lives and allow the cares of the world to absorb all our time and interest?
- Or will we “hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience?”

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” - Matthew 5:14-16



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Am I a “Christian,”
or am I a disciple of Christ?