
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Are you a Christian? Are you sure?**

Would your feelings be hurt if you thought you were a Christian, but discovered you really weren't? Being a Christian, according to the Bible, means more than acting civilized in front of people. It means more than going to church on Sundays and it means more than having a cross around your neck on a gold chain.

THE CASE OF AGRIPPA

What does the Bible say? According to the Bible, who is a Christian? The word Christian appears only three times in the entire Bible and we learn something about being a Christian from each one of these passages. First, let us look at:

Acts 26:27-28

27 [Paul asked] King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

Here the apostle Paul was speaking to a king. Paul was convinced that the king believed in Christ and the king almost decided to become a Christian. Listen to that again! King Agrippa believed in Christ, but he was not a Christian.

This tells me that "faith only" does not save a person from his past sins. Faith only does not make a person a Christian. In fact, if a person only believes and does not obey anything the Lord says, he is no better off than the devil:

James 2:19-20

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Being a Christian means believing in Christ, but it also means obeying Christ. If there is no obedience, a man is not a Christian, no matter how nice and mannerly he may act.

Hebrews 5:9

9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

If you want to be a Christian and you want to be saved, you must obey what Jesus said. As long as you refuse to obey the Lord, you are not a Christian.

A CHRISTIAN IS A DISCIPLE

The second passage in the Bible which uses the word Christian reads like this:

Acts 11:26

26 ... the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

This passage gives us more insight as to what a Christian is. A Christian according to this is a disciple of Christ. A disciple is a learner and follower of Christ. A disciple is one who agrees to obey what the Lord says:

John 8:31

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

Again:

John 14:15

15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

So then ... we see that a Christian is a disciple, a learner, a follower of Christ. A disciple is one who obeys the Lord's commandments.

QUESTION: How do you become a disciple to begin with? Is there any kind of initiation, or induction that must first take place before a person is considered a Christian?

Yes there is:

Matthew 28:19 (ASV)

19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This is Jesus speaking! Jesus Himself says that to become a disciple a person must be immersed in water into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. If a person has not been properly baptized, he is not a Christian! Remember, only disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26) and to become a disciple one must be baptized properly. Just any old baptism won't do. If a person has not been baptized right, they may think they are a Christian, but they really aren't!

In Acts 19:1-5 we read of several men who had been immersed with John's baptism, and they were not yet Christians. John's baptism was good and valid during its time, but it was replaced with the baptism of Jesus. These men in Acts 19 had not been baptized correctly. They thought they were Christians, but they were not and they had to be re-baptized according to the Lord's teachings.

According to the Lord's inspired apostle, baptism is an immersion in water for the remission of sins:

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; ...

Many people today think they are Christians just like the men in Acts 19, and they think they are saved, but they have never obeyed Bible baptism.

Mark 16:16

16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; ...

PERSECUTION

The word Christian appears in one final passage in the Bible:

1 Peter 4:16

16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

This passage reminds us all that being a Christian means we shall suffer! Many preachers today leave the impression that once you become a Christian all your problems will vanish and there will be nothing to worry about. But the Bible here explains that being a Christian means you will suffer. People will make fun of you and abuse you sometimes, but we are encouraged here not to be ashamed of that, but rather "glorify God on this account."

2 Timothy 3:12

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

There are evil men and women who will persecute disciples of Christ, but the disciples are reminded to remain faithful and eventually they shall be rewarded:

Luke 18:29-30

29 [Jesus] said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

30 who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."