

Who Is A Christian? How Can You Tell?

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The word Christian is spoken carelessly by many people, and when it is used scripturally it is often misunderstood due to the misuse of it being so common. In light of the pervasive misuse of the word and the eternal consequences of failing to be a "Christian" in the scriptural sense, we present this article, challenging each reader to answer the question for himself.

Beloved reader, think seriously and prayerfully, relative to how it can be determined who is actually a Christian! First, answer in your mind: Is it possible to determine infallibly who is indeed a Christian? Your answer will determine with what intensity you pursue the research project and the extent to which you will continue the investigation. For, if you decide that the answer cannot be discovered, then you will not waste your time.

We do not wish to give a value judgment on the matter; that is, pick out persons who we like or dislike and judge by our standard, saying; "this person is a good person, we like him, therefore, he is a Christian," or "this person is a bad person, we dislike him, thus he is not a Christian." Instead, a standard that is infallible, if there be such, should be used. The standard, of course, must be one that we accept, understand, and abide by. That standard, for us, is the Bible! We hope that such will satisfy you. If that standard will not satisfy you, however, then our exercise here will not benefit you. We would however, like to hear from you and we will meet you on a different investigative journey. But we recognize that if we are to continue our project, we must accept the same standard, and for us, that is the New Testament. If you are interested, believing that the New Testament is the standard by which one determines who is a Christian, then come along with us.

Our approach is similar to asking, "Who is an American?" There are rules by which one is measured as to whether or not a person is an American. If one is not an American, according to the official rules, when time comes to receive the benefits which belong only to Americans, that person will be disappointed and unrewarded. Furthermore, it will be too late for that person to act so as to participate in the benefits which are available at that time based on citizenship.

If one is looking forward to receiving the benefits of an American, but one who is really his friend knows that he has not yet met the requirements for citizenship, then he will assist that person to recognize that he is not a citizen and urge him to take the necessary steps to become a citizen according to the official rules, so that when the time of benefits come he will not be disappointed.

That same principle of truth is operative today, beloved, relative to one becoming and remaining a Christian. There are, evidently, many people claiming to be Christians and are thus looking forward to receiving the benefits which are available for Christians only, but yet have not met the requirements according to the official rules, the New Testament. Therefore, a real friend of such a person will try to get that person to recognize the requirements and then will urge him to take the steps necessary to make him eligible for the benefits. The New Testament tells us that God has called every person to respond to his offer of grace, "by faith", and thus become a child of his. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 2:11-13). That response on man's part is essential, and by this response one purifies his soul, being "born again" not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God. (1 Peter 1:22-23). Therefore, we proclaim the message of the New Testament and challenge each reader to look at it closely and see who is a Christian, and more particularly, if you are Indeed a Christian eligible for the benefits!

1. The meaning of Christian: One who belongs to Christ. Just as one is an American by the process of belonging to America, so one is a Christian because he belongs to Christ! A Christian has been purchased by Christ, (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20; Acts 11:26; 20:28), by the process of yielding to his power and authority, having learned of his will and willingly submitted to it. Therefore, he is mindful and appreciative of the purchase price which was paid for his redemption.

Every person, we must recognize, who is a Christian has come under the power of Christ's blood (Roman. 6:3-4; 1 Peter 1:22-23). Without that, no salvation would be available to them (Hebrews 9:22; 10:414). It is important, then, to acknowledge that no one is a Christian who has not been purchased by the blood of Christ, just as no one is an American or United States citizen who has not been either born in America or has met the rules for becoming a citizen. No one is a Christian who has not been born into the kingdom of God; each person has to meet the same terms of admission into the family of God. Likewise, no one is an heir to the inheritance of God who has not been born into the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15).

2. It becomes very obvious, then, that the manner in which one appropriates the blood of Christ is a significant point! This is something that we must look at very closely. Just what is involved in that process? Does a man have a part in the process? Is this something that happens to man, or is he active in it? Here is where many become confused and allow themselves to be deceived and misled! Man does have a part in his salvation; he is an active agent in his conversion, and without his mind being convinced of the truth that what he is doing comes from God and he is following the instructions to please God, then he does not become a child of God. Each person who desires to become a child of God, a Christian, if he or she will comply with the terms of the New Testament, is accepted by God (Acts 10:34,35). You see, Christ died for all men, and his desire is that all be saved and not lost, (1 Timothy 2:3-4); however, the responsibility is with man, Deity having done everything necessary for man to be saved, short of compelling one against his will; and that he will never do! No one will be rejected who comes (John 6:37), but none will be saved who does not come to Jesus in the manner he has described (John 14:6; 6:44-45; Acts 2:21,37-41,47). Beloved, it is that simple.

3. The essentials for man to be saved can be and must be known. One cannot perform that which he is not informed about. The New Testament teaching is plain and simple; however, Satan is active and effective in deceiving many, because they will not use their senses as effectively as God has instructed them. Friends, look closely at the following steps clearly taught in the New Testament:

1. Faith in God and Jesus, his Son, is essential to salvation (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24; Mark 16:16). Can any person deny that such is clearly taught in these passages?

2. Repentance from one's sinful life, a turning to God, is required by the person who is to be saved by the grace of God through faith (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31). Who will deny it?

3. Confession by the mouth in Jesus Christ and his saving power is required by the Father, for every person who will be saved eternally by the blood of Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). Can you read the passages honestly and deny that such is stated there?

4. Baptism in water for the remission of sins by the blood of Christ is a requirement set forth in the New Testament as a condition that must be met by each person who will be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:34; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21). Beloved, many are the pressures designed to deny that such is required. But can anyone honestly read these passages and go away believing that they are true and yet do not teach baptism as a requirement? I don't think so.

These matters are taught in the New Testament; the inspired record of God's will. They are essentials to having the remission of sins and being a Christian, belonging to Christ. Will you deny the teaching and yet, claim that you believe the New Testament? Will you claim that you have salvation, and yet deny that you have done these things? I am here to tell you that you cannot claim faith in the New Testament and at the same time claim that you are a Christian, a member of the family of God according to the New Testament, when you have not met the conditions set forth therein! Such claims are untrue, and they will be unproductive and he who makes such will suffer eternal disappointment and destruction (Matthew 21-27).

The alternative of being saved, is to be eternally ruined (Matthew 7:13-14); 7:24-27). The consequences are too great for me to stand by, claiming to be a friend of humanity and at the same time remain silent while many are bathing in the river of destruction. We challenge each reader to study and re-examine his or her condition before the God of heaven in the light of the teachings from the New Testament, which we have set forth above. We stand ready to study any Bible subject with any concerned person and assist them, to the extent of our ability, to obey the Lord and thus purify their soul (I Peter 1:22). Are you informed as to who is a Christian and what the standard is? Then, lastly and eternally: Are you sure that you are a child of God, eligible for that inheritance that is "incorruptible, and undefiled," that which will not fade away? (1 Peter 1:3-51. If yes, then "Right on!" If not, then don't wait another hour, act now!