

What Is a Christian?

The word “Christian” is, quite often, used in conversation by people who do not have a real understanding of what a Christian is. Some people believe that because they were born into a family whose religion was Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, etc., they are automatically a “Christian.” Others believe that because they attend a church of some sort, they must be Christian. Even the country they were born in has influenced their belief about being a Christian. All of this may be good topic and conversation material, but it still does not answer the question of, “What Is a Christian?”

Jesus Christ as God the Son left the glory of Heaven and took to Himself the body of a man; He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the body of a virgin named Mary {Matthew 1:18-25}. The purpose of this was, “...for he shall his people from their sins.” {Matthew 1:21} “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” {Luke 19:10} This was the whole and only purpose for Jesus Christ to come to this sin cursed world. During the approximately three and one-half years of Christ’s public ministry, there were many who believed on Him as the promised Messiah. Of His disciples, those who followed Him, Jesus asked the question, “But whom say ye that I am?” to which Peter answered, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” {Matthew 16:15-16} These disciples were firm believers in who Jesus was! The word “Messiah” appears two times in the Old Testament and it means “anointed.” In the New Testament the word “Christ” appears many times and it always means “anointed.”

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He appeared many times to His disciples and, just before He ascended back to Heaven, He spoke with the disciples and gave them a commission. Immediately following this, Jesus ascended, “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” {Acts 1:9} A disciple is a pupil, a learner; in the case of the disciples of Jesus Christ, they were His pupils or learners if you will; they were followers of Jesus.

As time went on, the disciples went about preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and, as they did so, their fame began to spread. These men were not just followers of Jesus Christ in the sense of people following others; these disciples believed with all their hearts that Jesus Christ is **THE** Messiah; they put their entire faith in Him and trusted Him as their personal Saviour. God chose to call these disciples Christian, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” {Acts 11:26} And so it came to be that all who had truly repented of sin and trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour were indeed Christians. All believers, like the disciples, believed that when Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary and shed His innocent blood, He was in fact paying their sin debt, a debt they owed but could never pay themselves. As the Apostle Peter so well expressed it about believing on Jesus Christ, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:” {1 Peter 1:18-19}

So, what is a Christian? A Christian is one who has truly repented of sin and, by faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, trusts Him as personal Saviour. A true Christian has the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ. It is not possible to do anything to earn forgiveness and salvation, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” {Ephesians 2:8-9} “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” {1 John 5:11,13} This Jesus is alive today and for eternity in Heaven with God the Father, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;” {Hebrews 10:11}

Friend, do **YOU** know this Jesus as your personal Saviour? “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” {Romans 8:34} You can because He loves you and died for you so that you can be forgiven and to be saved. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” {John 3:16} “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” {Romans 10:13}

--Richard A. Ciarrocca/Jan 2020

All Scripture references are KJV