



The Voice of Truth



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Who Is A Christian?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Being a Christian is something distinctive. It is a new way of life, a new manner of life, lived by the standards set forth in God's word, with new values and attitudes. Pleasing God is a Christian's daily want, longing and desire. A Christian is marked by characteristics and morals that set him apart from the world. The question is still before us, "Who is a Christian?" The Bible, God's word, holds the answer to this important question.

First, I want to say that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is one. There are those who teach and believe that there are Christians in all churches, "The simple believes every word" (**Proverbs 14:15**); "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (**Proverbs 16:25**). There are those who teach and believe that there are Christians in all churches; not so, not according to the scripture.

If we can determine from the word of God what maketh one a Christian, then we can know who is a Christian. Friends, let the word of God define for us who is and who is not a Christian. I know that there are those that can tell you some strange things about how they became a Christian, but let the word of God define for us who is a Christian. The word Christian in our society is used so loosely today. Friends, in reality, many who claim to be a Christian do not understand, realize or grasp what the Bible teaches on this subject. Friends, I tell you right now, only obedience to the word of God will make one a Christian period! One **MUST** be willing to accept the word of God, if he or she is to become a Christian. And, we **MUST** be willing to obey those commands, if we are to become a child of God (**Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 6:15-18; Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**).

Remember, let the word of God define for us who is a Christian. The first step in be-

coming a Christian is that one must first **HEAR** the word of God; friends, not just any words, but the words of the Lord (**2 John 9-11**). "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (**John 6:45**). This is the first step in becoming a Christian. One must first hear what thus saith the Lord. "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (**Acts 18:8**).

In becoming a Christian, the second step is faith, one must believe all things which he/she has heard. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing (unto him); for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and (that) he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (**Hebrews 11:6**). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (**Mark 16:16**). One cannot please God without faith! "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am (he), ye shall die in your sins" (**John 8:24**). Notice another passage; "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name ..." (**John 1:12**). If you believe in Christ you have the right or power to become a child of God. You are not a child of God by faith alone; you have the right to become one. Believing is important in becoming a Christian.

The most difficult part in becoming a Christian, the third step, is repentance. It involves turning away from all past sins. One must be willing to change his/her way of living to become a Christian. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (**Luke 13:3**). "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be

blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (**Acts 3:19**). "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." One must change from his/her sinful ways and from his/her evil deeds and do that which is right, if he/she is to make heaven their home. From the scripture we can see that repentance is a must.

The fourth step in becoming a Christian is that one must confess Christ as the Son of God. Jesus said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (**Matthew 10:32**). "(And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.)" The eunuch was not ashamed to confess Christ. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (**Romans 10:10**). We must confess Him Lord and Savior. If we do not confess Him now as the Son of God, someday we will (**Philippians 2:10-11**).

The last requirement before one can consider himself a Christian is that one must be baptized, immersed in water for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). Peter said, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (**1 Peter 3:20-21**). The scripture clearly teach that one is saved after baptism and not before (**Mark 16:15-16**). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away they sins, calling on his name" (**Acts 22:16**). Baptism is a must: it is necessary in becoming a Christian. To become a Christian one must be born again (**John 3:5**).

Friends, there are those who teach and believe that baptism is unimportant, one can be saved without baptism, but that is not according to the scripture. Let me ask you

some questions:

1. Are we saved by God's grace? Yes, (**Ephesians 2:5**). Where is this grace found? In Christ (**2 Timothy 2:1; 1 Corinthians 1:4**).

2. Where is all spiritual blessings found? In Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**).

3. Where is the love of God found? In Christ (**Romans 8:39**).

4. Where is salvation found? In Christ (**Acts 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:10**).

5. Where is eternal life found? In Christ (**Romans 6:23**).

6. **NOW HOW DOES ONE GET INTO CHRIST?** When one is baptized into Christ, he has put on Christ (**Galatians 3:27**).

Only the obedience to the word of God will make one a Christians, by hearing, believing, repentance, confession and baptism is one made a Christian. The word of God will turn out nothing but Christians, nothing less and nothing more, just Christians. Who is a Christian? Those who have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine (**Romans 6:17**). The next question is, "Are you a Christian?"

You Cannot Have It Both Ways

By Brian A. Yeager

I have often wondered how many doctrines are believed among brethren more out of tradition rather than an understanding of the truth. For example, most churches of Christ still reject mechanical instrumental music in worship to God. Most who reject this error will do so because they say that God has not authorized it (**Colossians 3:17**). Most correctly will say that they know mechanical instrumental music in worship to God is sinful because God did not ask for it to be done (**Joshua 1:7-9, II Samuel 7:1-7, Proverbs 30:5-6, Luke 4:4, and Revelation 22:18-19**). Some will correctly argue that the pattern (cf. **Exodus 25:9, Joshua 22:28, and II Timothy 1:13**) of New Testament worship by song shows that God wants our music to be singing not playing (**Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, I Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, and Hebrews 2:12**).

If you'll listen to those who argue the points above against mechanical instrumental music in worship to God, you'd think they

have a good grasp on how to establish biblical authority. Yet, if you examine many of those same people, you'll find that they will not use the same methods on other issues. Churches that will correctly argue what is written above will often use the Lord's money for entertainment, assisting sinners in paying their bills, social meals, etc. All of which, the Lord has not authorized. If they'd follow the pattern on entertainment and hospitality, they'd learn these are the works of the home, not the church (**Romans 14:17** and **I Corinthians 11:18-34**). If they'd follow the pattern on "benevolence" they'd learn that the collection taken of the saints can be used for the saints, not the sinner (**I Corinthians 16:1-4**).

Of course, there are churches that would correctly argue against all that is above (usually they'd be known as non-institutional churches of Christ), but still they too participate in unscriptural things. They refuse to use the points they would use above in their unscriptural practices (i.e. make up offerings of the Lord's Supper, colleges, foundations, etc.). You cannot apply Bible authority in some matters, and not in others. It gets worse...

The Inconsistency Continues If You Listen To Their Prayers

Prayer is a privilege that is given only to God's people (**Proverbs 15:29**, **Proverbs 28:9**, **Isaiah 1:15-16**, **Isaiah 59:1-4**, **John 9:31**, and **I Peter 3:12**). However, this does not mean we can just pray any way we want to. The things we pray for must be according to the will of God (**I John 5:14-15**). We can pray wrongly (**James 4:3**). This is why we teach people how to pray (cf. **Luke 11:1** and **Matthew 6:9-15**).

Now, consider the points we've already discussed in this article. We've seen how that many of our "brethren" will teach the truth on Bible Authority but they will not apply it to all they say and do. The same inconsistencies can be seen in prayers offered by "brethren". For example, most members of churches of Christ properly deny the existence of miracles today as we read about in the first century. These will correctly show

that when the word of God came in full, miracles were no longer needed to confirm these words (**I Corinthians 13:8-10**; cf. **Mark 16:15-20**).

While many in churches of Christ deny miracles today, there are many things related to the miraculous that are still prayed for. How many times have you heard wisdom, knowledge, faith, and healing prayed for? Well, all of these things are among those done miraculously in the first century (**I Corinthians 12:3-11**). I have preached against miracles existing today only to have a "brother" conclude the service that day by praying that we'd all have the wisdom to apply what was taught. QUESTION... Did he listen? ANSWER... NOPE! Asking such a one, immediately after his prayer, if he believed God would grant wisdom aside from His word today; the answer was "no". Brethren, we cannot have it both ways. Either miracles have ceased or they have not! Our preaching and teaching cannot be one way while our prayers are led in another way. That is severely inconsistent. It also shows that we really do not believe or understand what we proclaim is the truth (cf. **James 1:8; 4:8**).

Continuing with prayer and the idea of praying for things which we teach are impossible, we shall make another application. Most churches of Christ teach the truth in saying that the word of God is all-sufficient in guiding and saving our souls (**Matthew 4:4**, **II Timothy 3:15-17**, and **James 1:21-25**). Most will teach the truth in saying that God's word gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3**). Yet, these same folks will turn and ask God to help someone be saved. Of course this outright denies the all-sufficiency of God's word and completely rejects the truth taught in **Romans 1:16**. While saying one moment the word of God is all sufficient, the next moment these same individuals will pray for a better understanding of God's word. It's not that they have not read **Ephesians 3:4**. So why do they pray one thing and teach another? Brethren, we cannot have it both ways. Either the word of God is all sufficient or it is not.

Brethren, we are supposed to pray with

an understanding (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). How can we learn that miracles have ceased and the word of God gives us all things teaching us to live and be godly, yet we still ask for those things? Notice this command: *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (**Ephesians 5:17**).

Conclusion

We do not want to be the people who teach the truth, but do not practice it. There is enough of that among “churches of Christ”. Job wrote: *“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding”* (**Job 32:8**). Scriptural prayers require biblical knowledge and common sense. You know from the Scriptures what God will do, will not do, and has already done. You have to be a reasonable person to get these things right (**Hebrews 5:14**). We need to understand and practice the truth. We cannot know the truth says one thing while we are practicing another. We cannot have it both ways!

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The Church is Not... Author unknown

...composed of people who think they are better than others, but rather those who realize that they should be better than they are and must continually strive to do better (**Philippians 3:12-14**).

...composed of perfect people, but rather those who realize they are following a perfect Lord who revealed a perfect plan in a perfect book (**James 1:21-25**).

...composed of people who never sin, but rather forgiven sinners who acknowledge their faults and forsake them (**Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:8-9**).

...trying to withdraw from everyone, but

rather trying to draw everyone into the fellowship of Christ by walking in the light of Jesus Christ (**John 12:32; Mark 16:15-16**).

...trying to set up arbitrary rules to hinder anyone, but rather trying to show the rule of Christ which helps everyone (**Galatians 6:2; 1 John 3:16-18**).

...trying to take the joy out of your life, but rather trying to instill the beauty of holiness and true joy in your life (**2 Chronicles 20:21; Philippians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:8-9**).

...trying to separate you from your money, but rather trying to keep your money from separating you from God (**Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:13-21**).

...trying to rob you of your time, but rather trying to get you to put the priorities of your life in proper order so that you can enjoy eternity (**Matthew 6:33**).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Our Address

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com