

## WHAT DEFINES BEING A CHRISTIAN?

### **ACTS 26:28**

THEN AGRIPPA SAID TO PAUL, "YOU ALMOST PERSUADE ME TO BECOME A **CHRISTIAN**."

**1 PETER 4:16** YET IF *ANYONE SUFFERS AS A CHRISTIAN*, LET HIM NOT BE ASHAMED, BUT LET HIM GLORIFY GOD IN THIS MATTER.

## ORIGINS OF THE TERM "CHRISTIAN"

In the early church era, the label "Christian" first emerged in Antioch: "And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians" (**Acts 11:26**). The term implies those who identify with and follow Jesus Christ in faith, doctrine, and practice.

## ESSENTIAL BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST

A central aspect of being a Christian involves faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Scripture presents Him as fully God and fully man (**Philippians 2:5-7**), an essential truth. (**John 1:1-14**). This belief is relevant in Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... that He was raised on the third day" (**1 Corinthians 15:3-4**).

This resurrection is not merely symbolic; the historical credibility is reinforced by over 500 eyewitnesses (**1 Corinthians 15:6**). Outside biblical texts, historians such as Josephus and Tacitus allude to a crucified individual named Jesus and the rapid spread of His followers, underscoring that the faith was grounded in concrete events rather than myth.

## REPENTANCE AND SALVATION BY GRACE

Becoming a Christian means recognizing one's need for salvation and turning from sin. "Repent and believe in the gospel," Jesus proclaims (**Mark 1:15, 16**). Sin separates each person from God (**Romans 3:23**), but through Jesus' sacrifice, believers receive forgiveness and reconciliation with God (**Romans 5:8-11**).

This salvation is by grace – an unearned gift from God – rather than through human works: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast" (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

## PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A defining characteristic of a Christian is the promise of the Holy Spirit. After repentance and baptism, believers receive the Holy Spirit: "... having believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (**Ephesians 1:11-14**). The Spirit reminds Christians about godly living (**Galatians 5:16-25**), grants spiritual gifts, and testifies that they are children of God (**Romans 8:13-16**).

## SUBMISSION TO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Christians hold Scripture as the foundation for faith and conduct. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction" (**2 Timothy 3:16, 17**). Manuscript evidence across centuries and regions attests to the historical consistency and reliability of the Bible. Archaeological finds – from the Dead Sea Scrolls confirming Old Testament texts to excavations near Jerusalem verifying biblical sites – support the authenticity of biblical accounts.

Christians consider the Bible's entirety to be unified and inerrant, whether referencing the creation account (**Genesis 1-2**), prophecies fulfilled by Christ (**Luke 24:44-49**), or moral and practical instructions for believers (**Romans 12:1-2**).

## OBEDIENCE AND GOOD WORKS AS EVIDENCE

Obedience to God, salvation, serves as tangible evidence of an internal and external transformation. "By their fruit you will recognize them" (**Matthew 7:20**). Christians demonstrate changed living – loving God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (**Matthew 22:37**) and loving others (**Matthew 22:39**).

Such love manifests in service, generosity, love, and compassion, reflecting the character of Christ. Early Christians were known for their charitable deeds, hospitality, and sacrificial sharing. Acts of kindness and morality stand as outward confirmations of faith (**James 2:17-18**).

## HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

Being a Christian includes the hope of eternal life through the resurrection, as Jesus' victory over death extends to His followers (**John 11:25-26**). Scripture repeatedly teaches that those who trust in the risen Christ will also be raised in the last day (**1 Corinthians 15:20-22**). This future resurrection shapes the Christian's perspective on suffering, morality, purpose on Earth, and the church.

## COMMITMENT TO GLORIFY GOD

Ultimately, a Christian is to live a life oriented toward glorifying God. "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). This guiding principle encompasses worship, personal conduct, relationships, and engagements with the broader, mature, and ongoing journey empowered by God's grace, rooted in the truth of Scripture, sustained by the Spirit and the fear of God.

## SUMMARY

A Christian is defined by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – His death, burial, and resurrection – repentance, baptism for the forgiveness of sin is the promise of the Holy Spirit. Scriptures are the authoritative guide, providing the basis for belief and practice. Genuine believers reflect their trust in Christ through obedience, love, fellowship, and the steadfast hope for eternal life. This identity rests upon the promise of the redemptive work of Christ, verified by reliable biblical manuscripts, and corroborated by various lines of evidence from history and archaeology, offering a consistent testimony that has transformed individuals, becoming brethren throughout the centuries.

## ENTRANCE IN THE CHURCH AND SALVATION IS ONLY BY INVITATION THROUGH THE GOSPEL

**1 Peter 3:21** There is also an antitype which **now saves** us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jesus ascended to heaven **Acts 1:9** and **Acts 2:41-47**; the church begins. Understand these essential facts – we must (**HEAR**) the gospel and (**BELIEVE**), we must (**REPENT**) of our sins, (**CONFESS**) Jesus is the Son of God, and (**BE BAPTIZED**), for our sins to be washed away. Remain faithful, each one teach one.