

What is a Christian?

And how do we become one?

The word “*Christ*” or Latin “*christos*” means “*anointed*”. The equivalent word in Hebrew “*messiah*” anointed one, was applied to the priests under Old Covenant who were anointed with Holy Oil when appointed to office, this especially applied to the High Priest.

In Latin the plural ending “*iani*” denoted certain allegiances, for example:-

“*Augustiani*” Augustus’ men, soldiers or partisans led by Augustus;

“*Caesariani*” was used to describe Caesar’s slaves or clients;

“*Herodian*” the partisans or clients of King Herod.

Christ(ian) therefore was originally expressing the idea of “*soldiers of Christus*” or “*the household of Christus*” or the “*partisans of Christus*”.

Acts 11:26 [NIV] “*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*”

Antioch was the first church with a significant pure-Gentile, ex-Pagan element, that is the first place where Pagans would see Christianity as something other than a Jewish sect.

1 Peter 4:16 [NIV] “*However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*”

From the first use of the title “*Christian*”, it is indicated to be a stigma [a distinguishing mark or sign characteristic of a person].

The term “*Christian*” was linked to the cross which was thought of as the means of putting to death the worst of criminals.

The link with the cross was found to be objectionable also because of the shame and being vastly different to what was commonly acceptable.

The stigma is still there and has been throughout every generation.

John 16:1-4 [King James] “*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*”

A final warning by Jesus to all who choose to follow Him.

2 Timothy 3:12 [NIV] “*In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...*”

Paul also gave the same warning from personal experience as Jesus did.

What then is a Christian?

A partisan, soldier, disciple [follower] or slave who belongs to Jesus Christ the Son of God, and who has also received an anointing.

Partisan:- A person who is adherent to the party or cause.

Matthew 12:30 [NIV] *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”*

Soldier:- A person who is loyal to and fights for a certain cause.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 [NIV] *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No-one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs, he wants to please his commanding officer.”*

Disciple:- A person who is a follower of a leader and adherent to his thought, practices, etc.

Luke 14:26-27, 33 [NIV] *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate [love less in comparison] his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” ... “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

Slave:- A person who is the legal property of another and is bound to absolute obedience.

Acts 20:28 [NIV] *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”*

1 Peter 1:18-19 [NIV] *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*

We were redeemed [bought] by the blood sacrifice of Jesus, bought by our Master as a slave in a slave market.

Romans 6:16-18 [NIV] *“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”*

We have always been slaves, slaves to our personal desires or lusts but now slaves of Jesus our Saviour and our Master working now for righteousness, a God-like lifestyle.

How then do we become a Christian?

John 6:44 [NIV] *“No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

The initiative, as in everything in a Christian life, has to come from God the Father.

Not all people will be called to be Christians at this time in this present life.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30 [NIV] *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things***

that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

Not everyone is ready in this life to be called by God and become like His Son, to become a Christian.

Most have to be humbled in this life or are born in a humble status to find becoming a true Christian acceptable.

1 Corinthians 2:5 [NIV] “...so that your faith might *not* rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

Our faith as a Christian must be in God’s Power [the Holy Spirit] and not on what natural abilities we may have been given at birth.

We have to die to live as a Christian

Acts 2:36-38 [NIV] “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”

We must realise that we all are responsible for the murder of the Son of God, Jesus Christ [the Anointed One].

John 16:8 [NIV] “When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”

The Holy Spirit will be the One who convicts us of our sin.

Romans 2:4 [NIV] “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness leads you towards repentance?”

It is God, once He has called us, who out of love leads us to repentance.

We must repent

Romans 12:2 [NIV] “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Repentance is a renewing [making new] our minds, the way we look at and judge others and events.

Our new “yardstick” will be God’s Word, not the world’s customs and practices.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 [NIV] “**Godly sorrow** brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what **earnestness**, what **eagerness to clear yourselves**, what **indignation**, what **alarm**, what **longing**, what **concern**, what **readiness to see justice done**. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

Real godly sorrow will have these fruits, expressions and changes in our life.

These are responses that are in total contrast to the person who is only sorry they got caught in the sinful act, for that is the only sorrow the world’s society has.

Be baptised:-

Romans 6:1-5 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! **We died to sin**; how can we live in it any longer? **Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be **united with him in his resurrection.**”*

We die, baptism by total immersion is our symbolically being lowered into our grave.

But we rise again to a new life, even as the man Jesus rose from the dead to a new spiritual life with God the Father.

Romans 6:6-7 [NIV] *“For we know that our **old self was crucified** with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”*

Our “old self”, our own way of living, our own goals in life, have to die.

Matthew 6:24 [NIV] *“No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**”*

Our goal for wealth and worldly prestige has to fade and our desire to serve our Master, Jesus the Son of God, has to become our first priority.

1 Timothy 6:10 [NIV] *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

The desire for wealth can be a stumbling block to any maturing Christian.

Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit

1 John 2:27 [NIV] *“As for you, **the anointing you received from him** [God] remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as **his anointing teaches you about all things** and as **that anointing is real**, not counterfeit, just as it has taught you, remain in him.”*

This anointing we receive is that of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:29-34 [NIV] *“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: **“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.** I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”*

After His baptism, Jesus the Son of Man was anointed with the Holy Spirit symbolic of how we also after baptism receive the gift of Holy Spirit.

Jesus being the sinless Son of God did not need to repent or be baptised but allowed John the Baptist to perform His baptism as an example for us to follow.

Note:- John states that the dove [Holy Spirit] remained with Jesus.

The Greek word translated remained means a continued condition.

Jesus the Son of Man was filled with Holy Spirit of God from His birth which was by the Holy Spirit.

The “special anointing presence” of the Holy Spirit with us is conditional, the Holy Spirit although always present in a Christian is not always active in our lives as it was in Jesus the Son of Man.

Why is this?

Our past sinful lifestyle still clings to us and causes us to grieve or put out the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus the Son of Man being sinless did not do this.

Ephesians 4:30-32 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

Every time we allow bitterness or these other traits to rule our life the Holy Spirit is grieved as He is unable to do His work of building righteous character in our lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

This “fire” is the burning desire that the Holy Spirit can ignite and use in us to fulfil God’s Will for our lives.

What can cause this anointing of Holy Spirit to be “put out” or “quenched”?

The lack of our response to the instructions and advice given by Paul to the Christians in Thessalonica, listed in the rest of the same chapter of scripture.

These statements are a practical guideline to our day-to-day life as a “born again” person living a Christian life.

A similar list of practices is given to the church in Rome, preceded by a reminder that because of what God has already done for us, our natural response should be to offer our lives as a “living sacrifice” even as Jesus the Son of Man offered His life as a sacrifice for us and is now living only for God the Father.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Paul then gives the Christians a list of changes that need to be made in their lives as they mature as Christians.

Romans 12:3-21 [NIV] *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep*

your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Only as we allow the Holy Spirit to be active in our lives can we ever make all these changes.

Being a Christian is far more than an emotional response to a feeling of remorse

Being a Christian is far more than intellectual head knowledge of God's Word, the Handbook For Life, The Christian Bible.

Being a Christian is a new way of living with new goals, priorities and a total commitment to our Saviour from eternal death, Jesus the Son of Man and also the Son of God.

Becoming a true Christian is the greatest challenge in life, but it also is the only way to receive the gift of eternal abundant life.

John 10:7-16 [NIV] *"Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.** He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me,** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."*

The Greek word translated "know" is a word describing a very intimate relationship similar to that of a husband and wife.

1 Peter 2:24-25 [NIV] *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*

We have all gone astray, not followed the Only Good Shepherd, the One who laid down His life for us, Jesus the Son of Man, our Saviour.

Let us all turn to the Good Shepherd and allow Him to oversee our lives, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

Romans 8:6-11 [NIV] *“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*

The hallmark of a Christian is the active presence of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit in their lives.