

JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN CHRISTIAN?

A tremendous Delusion is gripping the Christian World. You need to know the TRUTH!

by Roderick C. Meredith

Today over four hundred different denominations and sects call themselves Christian. Yet they ALL disagree on certain doctrines and practices or they *would not be divided!*

Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I SAY unto you, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

Do all the professing Christians in our Western culture follow Christ by LOVING their enemies and *turning the other cheek* (Matt. 5:39) as He commanded?

Of course not!

That would not be practical, we are told.

The truth is that the greatest and most bloody wars in all human history have been waged primarily in Europe—the very heart of Western, "Christian" civilization.

In fact, the professing Christian church *directly instigated* a series of "holy wars" during the Middle Ages called the "Crusades." The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed., Vol. VII, art. "Crusades") describes the supposed BLESSING put on the murderous and bloodthirsty activities of the Crusaders: "The knight who joined the Crusades might thus indulge the bellicose side of his genius—under the aegis and at the bidding of the Church; and in so doing he would also attain what the spiritual side of his nature ardently sought—a perfect salvation and remission of sins. He might butcher all day, till he waded ankle-deep in blood, and then at nightfall kneel,

sobbing for very joy, at the altar of the Sepulchre—for was he not red from the winepress of the Lord?"

Were THESE men *true followers* of the humble carpenter of Nazareth who said: "LOVE your enemies"?

Yet remember that these men called themselves by the NAME of Christ—Christian. It seems that nearly all Western religions, philosophies and sects must persist in applying the *name* of CHRIST to their ideas, teachings and practices. In ancient times, the pagans openly and honestly *acknowledged* their worship of the various "gods" and demon spirits of their own choosing.

Using the NAME of Christ Proves NOTHING! But since the life, death and the *resurrection* of the Son of God, a great DECEPTION has resulted in the placing of Christ's NAME on every type of pagan, heathen, perverted philosophy of man that has come along!

Shocking as it may sound, the fact that many churches, doctrines, ideas and practices of men are called "Christian" *proves absolutely NOTHING!*

Did Christ start these ideas and institutions? Do they follow His teaching and His example?

How can you KNOW?

Almighty God inspired the Apostle John to describe the Devil as "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which DECEIVETH the WHOLE WORLD" (Rev. 12:9). Again, in Revelation 20:1-3, God describes how Satan will soon be restrained "that he should DECEIVE the NATIONS *no more.*"

These inspired scriptures certainly show that most people and nations have been misled and DECEIVED by

Satan the Devil! This, very frankly, is the "key" which explains WHY there are so many obvious contradictions in our supposedly "Christian" society. It shows WHY this world is so mixed up and CONFUSED about what the word "Christian" really means. It shows that our civilization has NOT been following Christ, but has been DECEIVED into going *many different ways* under Satan's confusing influence!

Strangely, yet at least honestly, some of this world's noted religious leaders and scholars have acknowledged that our professing "Christianity" has NOT EVEN SERIOUSLY TRIED to follow the literal *teaching and example* of Jesus Christ—its supposed Author!

A candid admission of the above fact was made by Dr. Rufus M. Jones. In his well-known work, *The Church's Debt to Heretics*, Dr. Jones acknowledges: "If by any chance Christ Himself had been taken by His later followers as the model and pattern of the new way, and a serious attempt had been made to set up His life and teaching as the standard and norm for the Church, *Christianity would have been something VASTLY DIFFERENT* from what it became. Then 'heresy' would have been, as it is not now, deviation from His way, His teaching, His spirit, His kingdom." [Emphasis ours.]

This noted church historian here plainly acknowledges that church leaders did NOT take Jesus' life and HIS TEACHING as the standard for their so-called "Christian" churches!

Ask yourself, honestly: *What other true standard COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE?*

What IS a True Christian? Our dictionaries have preserved part of the truth about what a "Christian" is *supposed* to be. *The American College Dictionary* states: "Christian, pertaining to or derived from Jesus Christ or His teachings . . . believing in or belonging to the religion of Jesus Christ."

But what WAS the teaching of Jesus Christ? What was His religion—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, "Mind Science"—WHAT?

The *only* authoritative ANSWER is found in the *inspired record* of what Jesus *did teach* and of the *perfect EXAMPLE* He set for us to follow. Your Bible contains this *inspired record!*

With the above questions in mind, let's *look into it—honestly—openly—without prejudice.*

What DID Jesus—the *Author of true Christianity*—actually TEACH and DO? And remember that a true Christian is one who *follows Christ* and His teaching!

What Jesus DID Teach. At the beginning of His ministry, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

The word "kingdom" means *government*. Jesus was talking about the coming *government* of God over this earth. He commanded: "REPENT YE, and *believe the gospel!*"

To "repent" means to be *so sorry* that you are not only willing to quit—but to *turn around and go the other way*. Of course we must repent of SIN. But *what is sin?* God answers: "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4).

So we must *repent* of DISOBEYING God's *government*—of *breaking His LAW!*

Again, notice Jesus' *own inspired words* on this subject: "Think NOT that I am come to destroy the LAW, or the *prophets*: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17) In other words, Jesus in His own life *perfectly performed* the spiritual intent and purpose of God's law. *Why* did He do this?

Let GOD answer! In His inspired prophecy about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, Isaiah wrote: "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will MAGNIFY the LAW,

and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21).

To *magnify* does NOT mean to destroy, but to *show forth and enlarge* an object or a thing to the fullest possible extent. Jesus *perfectly fulfilled* and *magnified* God's law to show us its fullest spiritual application and also to *set us an EXAMPLE* that we should follow in His steps (I Pet. 2:21).

Jesus continued in this same discourse: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these *least* commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the *least* in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall DO and TEACH them, the same shall be called GREAT in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). So according to Jesus' *literal teaching*, you have to both DO AND TEACH even the LEAST of God's commandments if you are to become great in His Kingdom.

Isn't that PLAIN?

Throughout the rest of this teaching, commonly called the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus continued to MAGNIFY God's law and bring out the spiritual *intent* and *purpose* of that law for Christians with God's Spirit.

How Jesus MAGNIFIED the Law. He showed that we are not only to restrain ourselves from literal murder, but that to even HATE a brother—involving as it does the *spirit* of *murder*—is bringing us into *judgment* before the spiritual law of God. He vividly illustrated how one can commit adultery not only by performing the literal act, but by LUSTING after another woman in his heart (verses 21-31).

Read these examples in your own Bible. *Think about them.* In every case, they obviously do NOT do away with God's law but rather make it *all the more binding!*

Matthew's fifth chapter ends with Jesus' instruction: "Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Obedience to God and His law is the keynote in the entire Sermon on the Mount. Jesus declared: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the WILL of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Later, notice Jesus' *own words*—

His teaching—on *how to be saved*. "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: *but if thou wilt enter into life, KEEP the COMMANDMENTS*" (Matt. 19:16-17). Then (verses 18-19) Jesus proceeded to name some of the *Ten Commandments*.

God's Government Has Laws Speaking about the New Testament Gospel which He preached, Jesus stated: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the *kingdom of God* is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the LAW to fail" (Luke 16:16-17). Here Jesus clearly showed that God's *Kingdom* or GOVERNMENT—is inseparably connected with GOD'S LAW. He showed that that law would NEVER fail! Then He went on to show *what law* He was talking about (verse 18) by commenting on the commandment concerning adultery—*one of the Ten Commandments!*

So the good news of *God's Kingdom* is inseparably related to the LAW of God as contained in the *Ten Commandments*. Jesus always *magnified* and *kept* THIS LAW during His lifetime. He said: "I have KEPT my Father's commandments" (John 15:10).

After His resurrection, as Christ was commissioning His disciples to preach His message to ALL NATIONS—certainly including the Gentiles—Jesus commanded: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: *teaching them to observe ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Here Jesus is clearly and plainly telling His apostles to go out to *all nations* preaching exactly the SAME message of *obedience* to God's LAW and His *government* as He Himself had taught them!

But carnal-minded men REBEL at the teaching of *obedience* to God's commandments. They say it is IMPOSSIBLE for human beings to obey

God's law. They come up with many different excuses for disobeying the commandments of God and teaching that you are saved by a sentimental acceptance of Christ's NAME or PERSON without any real *obedience* to Him or God as your LORD and MASTER!

Jesus Set a Perfect Example. Remember that a Christian is *one who literally follows the example of Jesus Christ!* Jesus was the "light" that God sent into the world to show man HOW he ought to be living. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

Peter was inspired to write: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an EXAMPLE, *that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*" (I Pet. 2:21-22). Jesus OBEYED GOD. He did NO SIN—and sin is the "*transgression of the law.*" He *obeyed God and suffered persecution willingly* and in all this set us an EXAMPLE that we *should follow His steps!*

The apostle John wrote: "He that saith he abideth in him [Christ] ought himself also to walk [to LIVE], even as he walked" (I John 2:6).

This passage clearly shows that the true Christian must LIVE just as Jesus Christ did live—setting us an example. The New English Bible renders this in more modern English: "Here is the test by which we can be sure that we are in him: whoever claims to be dwelling in him, *binds himself to LIVE as Christ himself lived.*"

So we are LITERALLY to follow the inspired EXAMPLE of Jesus Christ's perfect life! And we have seen that Jesus DID KEEP the Ten Commandments—LITERALLY (John 15:10).

If you really *study* the inspired record of Jesus' life carefully, you will see where Jesus *prayed constantly* on both knees to God the Father and *fasted* when He was in need of being especially close to God (Mark 1:35; 2:20; 9:29). You will see where Jesus *literally* OBEYED the fourth commandment—setting us an example (Luke 4:16, 31). You will see where Jesus *refused* to be drawn into worldly wars and *politics* (John 18:36-37).

You will see that Jesus OBEYED the commandments of God both in the letter AND in the spirit; that He lived a life of GIVING and SERVICE; and that He conducted Himself as an *ambassador* of a foreign kingdom or government—God's government in heaven which will soon come to replace ALL governments on this earth—and therefore had *no part* in the *religions, politics, wars and disputes* of His time.

True Christians are LITERALLY to follow this marvelous *example!* And Paul was inspired to write: *Jesus Christ the SAME yesterday, and today, and forever*" (Heb. 13:8).

Christ has NOT CHANGED. He will guide you to live the *same kind of life* today that He DID LIVE in His own human body more than 1900 years ago! And remember, Jesus "was in ALL POINTS *tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15).

How You CAN Follow Christ's Example! The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is NONE of his" (Rom. 8:9). In plain language, if you are without God's Spirit you are NOT a *Christian!*

But *what good* is the Holy Spirit, some will ask, *What does it do?* Jesus answers: "If ye love me, *keep my COMMANDMENTS.* And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another *Comforter*, that he may abide with you forever; even the *Spirit of truth*; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth *with you*, and shall be IN you" (John 14:15-17).

Then Jesus continued by saying: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." Obviously He was going to come unto and "comfort" BY this Spirit which would dwell IN the disciples. He stated in Verse 23: "If a man love me, he will keep MY WORDS [obeying His commandments]: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is obvious that both Jesus and God the Father do not come down and live INSIDE of someone in bodily form! Rather, they live IN the Christian *through the Holy Spirit!*

And Jesus continued by stating: "But the Comforter, which is the

Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (verse 26). Notice that the SAME Spirit emanates out from Christ and the Father. That Spirit TEACHES Christ's true followers and helps them remember and apply the truth.

So it is that the apostle Paul could exclaim: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but CHRIST liveth in me:* and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith OF the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Here we see that—*through the Holy Spirit*—Christ comes to live HIS LIFE literally IN the true Christian who not only lives by faith in Christ but by the very faith OF Jesus Christ—the *same faith that guided and motivated Him in His human body over 1900 years ago!*

Through the Holy Spirit, then, you receive the very *nature and power of CHRIST* to *obey* the commandments, laws and ways of Almighty God! But it is actually CHRIST doing it.

However, you must *surrender* your will to Him, and you must REPENT of your *lawlessness* and ACCEPT CHRIST as your SAVIOUR and as your *Lord and MASTER!* Then you must *yield* and *strive* to be an *effective instrument* in His hands!

Now can you understand?

It is actually CHRIST who keeps the commandments all over again—just as He did over 1900 years ago—in *your mortal body!* It is HIS righteousness operating in your body which you have *willingly yielded* to Him as *His instrument.*

HOW the Holy Spirit Functions. The inspired formula for receiving God's Holy Spirit was given by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, 31 A.D. "Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, and BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

Since your old self must be *buried* or *baptized* for the remission of SIN, you must REPENT of *sin!* Recall that "*sin is the transgression of the law.*" So you must *repent* of BREAKING GOD'S LAW!

You must be *baptized* in a watery grave as an outward acknowledgment of the *death penalty* you have brought on yourself by disobeying the *LAW* of your Creator, and of your *willingness* to let the *old self die*. Then, after real *repentance* of your rebellion against God and your own carnal ways and desires, and fulfilling the ordinance of humility in being baptized and accepting Christ's shed blood as payment for your past sins in *FAITH*, you are *PROMISED* the "gift" of *God's Holy Spirit*. Then, through His Spirit, *CHRIST* places His nature within you—His *love*, His *faith*, His *strength* to overcome your own weaknesses and the temptations of Satan and of this world.

The *LOVE* you receive through God's Spirit is not mere human love, but the very love of *God*, "because the *LOVE of God* is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

Now *how* does this love operate?

Let Christ's *WORD* give the true answer! "For this is the *love of God*, that we *KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS*; and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

It is through *GOD's* love placed in us by His Spirit that we are enabled to *KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS*!

Not through your *strength*, but through the spiritual *POWER* which God's Holy Spirit imparts, you *CAN* follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ. You *CAN* yield to let Jesus live the *same kind of life in you* which He *DID* live over 1900 years ago—keeping the *same* laws of God, worshipping on the same Holy Days which *GOD* ordained, remaining *separate* from this world's society, politics and wars, and—through constant Bible *study*, earnest *prayer*, occasional fasting, and consistent spiritual *overcoming* and *GROWTH*—you can yield to let God *literally* fashion you in His *spiritual image* to be *born of Him* in the resurrection as His *LITERAL SON*—*possessed of His very nature*!

This is, in fact, the very *PURPOSE* of your existence!

Identity of the True Christians. Down through history, God has *always* set apart and *marked* those who truly serve Him by *keeping His commandments and His LAWS*. The apostle John was inspired to write:

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth *NOT* his commandments, is a *LIAR* and *the truth is not in him*" (I John 2:4).

The *true* God doesn't even hear our prayers unless we *keep His commandments*! "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

GOD further states: "Whosoever transgresseth and *abideth not in the DOCTRINE* of Christ, *HATH NOT GOD*. He that abideth in the *DOCTRINE* of Christ, *he hath both the Father and the Son*. If there come any unto you, and *bring not this DOCTRINE*, receive him *NOT* into your house, neither bid him *God speed*: For he that biddeth him *God speed* is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 9-11).

The *true teaching*—the matter of *OBEDIENCE* to the true God and His *LAW*—this is of *PARAMOUNT* importance in the eyes of the God of your Bible!

Even in the final book of your Bible, the book of Revelation, this standard of *OBEDIENCE* is used as a sign of *IDENTITY* of God's true Church down through the ages.

Notice! Speaking of the true Church which has to flee from the Devil at the time of the end, God says: "And the dragon [Satan the Devil] was wroth with the woman [the true Church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which *KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS* of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

And, at the very *END* of your Bible, as His final message to *YOU*, God states: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. *Blessed* are they that *DO HIS COMMANDMENTS*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:13-14). You might write for our free booklet entitled *Where Is God's True Church Today?*

Now You KNOW! Now you know what *true Christianity* *MEANS*! It means *yielding yourself* to let Jesus Christ *literally* *LIVE* His life in you! It means *surrendering* to the will of your Maker—and *KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS* through the *POWER* of His Spirit within you!

It means living a life of constant *prayer*, *Bible study*, constant *overcoming* and *OBEDIENCE* to the will of God the Father—following the perfect *EXAMPLE* of Jesus Christ which He set that *you should follow in His steps*—growing in grace and in the *knowledge* of Jesus Christ—His *WAYS*, His *LAWS*.

True Christianity means being able to state sincerely, as the Apostle Paul: "I am *crucified with Christ*: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *CHRIST LIVETH IN ME*: and the life which I now live in the flesh *I live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

True Christianity means really *doing all this LITERALLY*—remembering that Jesus Christ is the *SAME* yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), and that He will live the *SAME* kind of life in you today that He did over 1900 years ago. In a true Christian today, Christ will keep the *same commandments* He *DID* keep on earth, worship on the *same days* He *DID* observe while on earth, live the *same way* of life He *DID* live on earth well over 1900 years ago!

Strive to study God's Word so you can apply *all the details* of this tremendous principle to every phase of *your life*—by accepting the *true* Christ as *Saviour* and *Living LORD*—learn to *LIVE as Jesus Christ did live* through His Spirit within you!

Then—through His *POWER*—you will be made *FIT* to live *forever* in the glorious *WORLD TOMORROW*! □

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