

What Is a True Christian?

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What Is a True Christian?

More than 400 sects and denominations call themselves "Christian"! Yet they all have some basic differences.

Would Jesus recognize the organizations using His name today? How can you be sure what a true Christian is?



Have you ever met a true Christian? Have you ever attended a church full of true Christians? Are you sure? What is it that makes a person truly Christian?

America calls itself a Christian nation. We even print the words, "In God We Trust," on our currency. In many Western nations, Christianity is the official state religion.

Yet in our mixed-up, confused world, there are more than 400 sects and denominations calling themselves "Christian." They all have somewhat different ideas or practices. Even so, *every one of them* is named after Jesus Christ! Partly because of this, many non-Christians scoff at the idea that Christianity is directly inspired by God.

And no wonder. For many of the greatest wars in modern history have been started by professing Christian nations. And statistics show that the incident rate of rape, robbery and murder has been skyrocketing in many of the Western, *Christian* nations over the past several decades.

Why?

Could it be that they *don't really understand* what Christianity is all about? Could it be that, even though millions are heavily involved in "churchianity," they don't really grasp the plain, clear teachings of Christ and live by them?

Modern philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in his *Attack upon Christendom*, wrote, "The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist. Millions of people through the centuries have little by little cheated God out of Christianity, and have succeeded in making Christianity exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament."

We may ask then, *why* are millions so confused about what true Christianity is--so confused that some have concluded it doesn't even exist?

What Is a True Christian?

A Planned Deception

The fact is, true Christianity--and true Christians--*do exist*. But they may be harder to find than you would think. If you will examine what the Bible teaches, you'll find out *why* there are so few true Christians.

Let me explain. Jesus said, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive many*" (Matt. 24:5 KJV). Notice that these people do NOT come in their *own* name! Many people erroneously believe that this verse refers to a multitude of "false Messiahs," each pretending that he, personally, was the true Christ. And in fact, *some* misguided men have made such blasphemous claims. The most famous recent example is David Koresh, who died at the besieged Branch Davidian compound in 1995.

But common sense should tell us that this is a *misinterpretation* of the Scriptures. Remember that the Bible says "*many* shall come," and shall "*deceive many*." The fact is, there just haven't been MANY who have personally claimed to be Christ. And there most certainly have not been *many* who were taken in--"deceived"--by them. David Koresh himself hoodwinked no more than a few. He definitely didn't sway teeming millions of human beings into believing that he, personally, was the Messiah!

What, then, is the answer? Is Jesus *mistaken* in His claim? Not at all. The correct interpretation of Matthew 24:5 is that *many* people would come and claim that JESUS CHRIST was the Messiah. So far, so good. But they would "deceive many" by subverting, twisting and perverting all that Christ taught and stood for.

These false prophets, then, come in *Jesus'* name and tell people that He is the Christ. Using *His* name, they go on to palm off their own *false* religious ideas and philosophies under the banner of "Christianity"!

You see, if people are "clever" enough, they can apply the term "Christian" to almost anything. They can wrap an idea or philosophy in nice, religious-sounding phrases and get others to believe it.

But there's even more to it than that. For beyond misguided men and women, there is a great spirit being called Satan the Devil. Formerly an extremely wise and beautiful cherub or angel (Ezek. 28:12-15), he is now fiendishly clever and still very attractive and compelling in his appeal to unknowing individuals (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14).

God calls Satan the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). And Satan is further described in Revelation 12:9 as the "great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."

So if Satan works in the sons of disobedience, and if he "deceives the *whole world*," then obviously BILLIONS of people are taken in by him!

The point is that, under the invisible but powerful influence of Satan, there have been *all kinds* of ideas presented as "Christian" that are not Christian at all. Some of them come directly from paganism. Furthermore, the clear, straightforward teachings of Jesus Christ about a *way of life* have been virtually *buried* under an avalanche of strange creeds, doctrines and liturgy.

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, in his handbook, *The Story of the Christian Church*, makes this striking point:

We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., "The Age of Shadows," partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church fathers, we find a church in many aspects VERY DIFFERENT from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul [1970, p. 33].

In the above quote, this mainstream Protestant author acknowledges that the professing Christian church became VASTLY "different" after the original apostles died. WHY? Who gave *anyone* the AUTHORITY to change the beliefs and practices of the Church? Or did deceived men just take it on themselves to make these profound changes?

What Is a True Christian?

What Jesus Actually Taught

To understand how the various churches have become so "different" from one another, we need to get back to the source of Christianity--Jesus Christ. If *anyone* knows what true Christianity is, it would certainly be Him!

As a young Jew in Israel, Jesus was reared to keep the Ten Commandments. He observed God's weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days that God had revealed to ancient Israel. It seems easy for Bible scholars to forget these simple facts, gloss over them or pretend they're irrelevant.

But as we shall see, the fact that Christ kept God's laws makes a HUGE difference. And those who pretend otherwise do so at great peril to their *eternal lives!*

Listen!

Jesus was asked by a young man, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life." Christ answered: "If you want to enter into life, **keep the commandments.**" The young man then asked, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 19:16-19).

So Jesus clearly taught that the WAY to eternal life was to obey God by keeping His Ten Commandments!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly *magnified* the Ten Commandments. A careful study shows that far from "doing away" with these commandments, Jesus made them even more binding. Christ revealed that they formed a *spiritual* law, including, but far greater in scope than, the literal requirements God had given to ancient Israel. He taught that His followers were not only to refrain from murder, but also that they were not even to harbor the *spirit* of murder--misguided anger, hatred, rage--in their hearts (Matt. 5:21-22).

He went on to show that not only must a true Christian never commit adultery, but that "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (v. 28).

What Is a True Christian?

The Law of Liberty

Think of it! If the whole world would start living by the Ten Commandments--as magnified by Jesus Christ--we would have no crime, no murder, no adultery, no broken homes, no displaced children and *no wars!* The deep sense of stability, peace and security that would then fill the world would have a definite *healing* effect in every way. The incidence of depression and mental disease would greatly diminish. Even physical sickness and suffering would decline because mental attitudes affect our physical health.

God's law FREES us from harmful conduct. The Apostle James called it the "**law of liberty.**" He wrote, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, '**Do not commit adultery,**' also said, '**Do not murder.**' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the **law of liberty**" (James 2:10-12).

This New Testament apostle, then, was inspired to urge us to keep the law of God--summarized by the **Ten Commandments!** He also said that if we obey only *part* of that law, while disobeying other parts, we are "*convicted by the law as transgressors*" (v. 9). So the Ten Commandments were NOT done away or "*nailed to the cross*"--otherwise, they could not convict anyone of anything!

As magnified by Christ, God's wonderful "law of liberty" would indeed provide humanity with world peace and individual happiness--*if it were universally obeyed!* But will that ever happen?

Yes indeed!

Jeremiah's inspired prophecy describing the coming 1,000-year rule of Christ is quoted in the letter to the Hebrews: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (8:10-11).

So it is clear that the very basis of life in the World Ahead will be God's spiritual law, the Ten Commandments. All men and women will come to love, adore and worship the true God--**and do what He commands.** All will learn to *love their neighbors* as themselves. Through true conversion and the empowerment of God's Spirit, they will gradually learn to "get inside the head" of their fellow man and to help, serve, build and encourage *all* human beings to lead happy and productive lives.

As stated above, when God's "law of liberty" is universally understood and obeyed, the world will truly be "at peace"--in a way it has never been since Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden.

Is True Christianity Simply Doing "Good Works"?

There is no question that good works have been done by a wide spectrum of religious organizations. As people treat their neighbors well, they and those around them experience blessings. Speaking of the spiritual laws and principles of the Bible, Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). In other words, these inspired words describe intrinsic values and forces that operate automatically in many cases--just like the law of gravity. If a person does good to others and treats them with love and kindness, it almost *automatically* works out that he is going to be blessed in one way or another. This principle holds true no matter what someone's religion might be.

However, actions like being personally helpful and loving--or doing "good works" in some kind of organized effort--in NO WAY, of themselves, qualify people for eternal life in the Kingdom of God. I have had fellow ministers of Christ tell me more than once that some of the most loving, generous and religiously devoted people they have ever known are the Thai Buddhists. Many of these folks exhibit a personal warmth, grace, gentleness and spirit of service that is *seldom seen* even in the Christian world. And this despite the general destructiveness of their false religion, which rejects the very Savior of all humanity, Jesus Christ. Many professing Christian organizations today are to be likewise commended for their service and acts of charity on behalf of the needy or disadvantaged. But if these same groups reject God's laws and the ENTIRE way of life that Christ revealed, then what will be the end of their good works?

Jesus Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice *lawlessness*'" (Matt. 7:21-23). And Christ spoke further about those who worshiped Him to no avail: 'In VAIN they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For

laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men" (Mark 7:7-8).

So although following the Golden Rule and doing good works are integral parts of Christianity, there is more. Yes, we certainly *do* need to work on developing gentleness, kindness and service toward others. But we must also--in a very real sense--be CONQUERED by God. Realizing that our own righteousness is simply not good enough (Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:23), we must be totally *surrendered* to do God's will in EVERY phase and facet of our lives--not just in "good works." We must *obey* His Ten Commandments (Matt. 19:17), *keep holy* the days He *made holy* (Ex. 20:8) and let Jesus Christ live His life within us fully through the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 2:20 KJV).

The major Christian denominations down through history have NOT really done these things. And they have NOT been explaining God's awesome plan and purpose for mankind. They have NOT been actively preparing their followers to be kings and priests in the soon-coming Government of God to be set up on this earth under Jesus Christ. They have NOT been preaching the Bible's prophetic warnings about end-time events that our people so desperately need to hear. In fact, most of them have virtually *no understanding* of the vital one-fourth of the Bible devoted to prophecy--so they seldom have anything to say about it. And so, because of all this, these major denominations are NOT doing the Work of God or preparing His people for the Kingdom of God.

So read (and carefully re-read!) this vital booklet--so that you can understand what *true* Christianity is really all about!

What Is a True Christian?

What Should You Do?

If you want to become a true Christian--the kind of Christian the *Bible* describes--there are several things you need to do.

First, you must *absolutely prove to yourself* that there is a real God--not an "essence of good" somewhere out in the heavens, but the literal Spirit Personality who created and now rules the entire universe. As the book of Hebrews tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (11:6).

Furthermore, you need to prove to your own satisfaction that the Bible is truly God's *inspired revelation* to man. As Paul explained, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Then you need to begin to really *study* the Bible! Don't just read it. Rather, with different translations, a concordance and other study aids, begin to carefully *pore over* the Bible. *Meditate* on what you read, *pray* about it and determine to *obey* God's Word--to DO what God says.

For Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Luke 4:4). So you must sincerely yield yourself to LIVE by every word of God! Then, through this personal, genuine approach of *seeking* the true God and His will, you will no doubt be led by His Spirit to see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God and Savior of the world--that He is *your* Savior from *your* sins.

Paul describes it this way: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:8-10).

So we are "justified," that is, made right--reconciled to God--by our heartfelt acceptance of Christ's death as payment for our personal sins. *We all* must continually have a deep, personal sense of appreciation and loyalty to Jesus for having so "emptied Himself" on our behalf.

For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *gave Himself* for us! And now He is our faithful High Priest, sitting in glory at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us as we seek God in prayer (Heb. 4:14-16). Christ is also the Living Head of His Church (Eph. 1:22-23). And He

is coming soon to reign as King over the whole earth (Rev. 11:15).

You, personally, **must accept the real Jesus Christ of the Bible as your personal Savior, your Lord and Master, your High Priest and coming King.** Your commitment to Christ must be absolutely genuine!

But next is a vital "key."

You must not merely accept Jesus' *person*. You must also believe in His *Message*--in what He taught and stood for! For Jesus Himself asks, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

We have already noted this same sentiment in Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

So what was the Message that Jesus preached? "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).


Jesus came preaching the GOOD NEWS of the Kingdom or Government of God. As we have already seen, He clearly taught that the LAWS of that Kingdom are based on the Ten Commandments.

Therefore, to be a true Christian, you must *repent* of your sins and dedicate yourself to begin *keeping the laws* of that coming Government, to *believe* the Good News about the Kingdom of God and to *accept* Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin.

If you would like more information about the *true* Gospel of Jesus Christ, please call or write to request your *free* copy of our eye-opening booklet, *Do You Believe the True Gospel?*

What Is a True Christian?

Repent and Be Baptized

 e have already seen from James 2:9 that sinners are convicted by the law. James also states, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (v. 10). The law has ten fundamental points--the Ten Commandments. If we break *any* of them, we are *convicted by the law*.

The Bible makes it *very clear* what sin *is*. Near the end of his life, John wrote, "Sin IS the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4 KJV). He further wrote, "And whatever we ask [of God] we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (v. 22). This scripture clearly shows that *keeping God's law* is so important that even the answers to our prayers--at least in large measure--depend upon it. How vital it is that true Christians come to grasp the fact that they are *accountable* to God to keep the Ten Commandments!

The New Testament tells us *what sin is*. It *never* says that sin is dancing or going to a movie. For sin cannot, in every case, be defined simply by *what you do*. But sin always involves wrong thoughts or attitudes that violate the *spirit* of the law of God.

Certainly, the kind of dancing that incites sexual lust is always sinful. And constantly seeing movies that glorify violence and lust will undoubtedly ease the way for sinful thoughts to rule your mind.

But remember that the standard is *not* "here's the way *I* look at it" or "here's what *so-and-so* says." The true standard for determining right and wrong is the law of *God*. "Sin IS the transgression of the law." Could anything be clearer?

A true Christian, then, must internalize God's law so that it becomes part of his thinking and identity--the very fabric of his being. For that to happen, he must be filled with, and led by, God's Holy Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God," Paul stated, "they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14 KJV).

But *how* do you receive the Holy Spirit? And how does it *function*? The way to receive the Holy Spirit was revealed by the Apostle Peter. He said, "**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Since your old self must be *baptized*, that is "immersed"--figuratively *buried*--in water for the remission of sin, you must repent of, or turn back from, sin! Recall that "sin is the transgression of the law." So you must TURN BACK FROM BREAKING GOD'S LAW!

You must be *baptized* in a "watery grave" as an outward acknowledgment of both the *death penalty* you have brought on yourself by disobeying the LAW of your Creator and your *willingness* to let the *old self die*.

God's Word tells us, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"
(Rom. 6:3-4).

What Is a True Christian?

A Covenant with Your Creator

So when you decide to become a true Christian, you need to be willing to "bury" the old selfish self in baptism. Frankly, only God can *grant* you the real repentance you need to fulfill His will (Acts 11:18). But if He is, in fact, opening your mind to grasp what true Christianity is all about--and calling you to be in the first resurrection--then you must utterly SURRENDER your will to the Creator. You must sincerely and bitterly REPENT of having carelessly gone your *own way* all these years--and repent of continually breaking and SMASHING God's Holy law in both your thoughts and your actions. **REAL repentance means to turn around and go the other way!** You must, then, make a *covenant with your Creator* to not only STOP BREAKING the Ten Commandments but--with the *power* of God's promised Holy Spirit--to start KEEPING them as a *way of life*.

You must determine that, with God's help, you will NEVER let any desires or vanities or "gods" come between you and the true God. That you will remember to keep holy *His* Sabbath day. That you will truly *honor* your parents. That you will not only refrain from committing murder, but will carefully guard your mind against even entertaining murderous *thoughts* of hatred or violence against your neighbor. That you will not only refrain from ever committing adultery, but you will not even let your mind dwell on lust (Matt. 5:27-28). You must also determine that you will constantly ask God for the strength to *not* steal, to *not* lie and to *not* covet.

Remember, after real *repentance* from rebelling against God and a heartfelt disavowal of your own carnal ways and desires, you are humbly baptized--signifying your acceptance of, and faith in, Christ's shed blood as payment for your past sins. After baptism, 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 weaknesses and the temptations of Satan and this world.

The love you receive through God's Spirit is not mere human love. It is the very love of *God*, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5 NRSV).

Now *how* does this love operate? Let God's Word give the true answer! "For **THIS** is the love of God, that we **keep His commandments**. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Through God's love placed in us by His Spirit, we are able to keep His commandments!

It is not through *your mental strength*, but through *God's spiritual power*--which His Holy Spirit imparts--that you *can* follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ. You *can* yield to let Jesus live the same kind of life in you that He *did* live almost 2,000 years ago--keeping the same laws of God, worshiping on the same Holy Days that *God* ordained, remaining

separate from this world's society, politics and wars. And--through earnest prayer, constant Bible study, occasional fasting and consistent spiritual overcoming and growth--you *can* yield to let God literally fashion you in His image to be resurrected as His SPIRITBORN CHILD--*possessed of His very nature!*

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

What Is a True Christian?

The Spiritual POWER You Need

As we've seen, in order to keep God's spiritual law and to overcome our own sinful ways, we need the love that only God can give. And this He has promised through His Spirit. Furthermore, we have just learned from 1 John 5:3 that God's love operates through keeping His law.

Again, John--the apostle Jesus especially loved in a personal way--writing near the end of the apostolic era, tells us that God's love leads us to "**keep His commandments.**" And in spite of clever modern theological arguments to the contrary, John says God's "commandments are *not* burdensome."

A true Christian, then, will have God's love flowing through him like "rivers of living water" (John 7:38-39). As he deeply *studies* the Bible and feeds on it, and as he fervently *prays* to God every day on his knees for the spiritual strength, faith, guidance and love he needs, the true Christian *grows* spiritually.

It is obvious that millions of professing Christians *never change!* They may have "grown up" in a particular church. Or they may have "accepted Jesus" in some evangelistic meeting. But in most cases, the Christ they've accepted is NOT the Christ of the Bible! The "gospel" they've been taught is NOT the Gospel of the Bible! Far too often, it's just a message about the PERSON of Jesus Christ--about how He died for our sins and that the only thing *we* need to do is "believe."

Usually, these innocent victims of Satan's massive deception are NOT told to keep the Ten Commandments! They are NOT told that Christ must live the *same kind of life* within them that He lived as a human being almost 2,000 years ago. They are NOT told about the glorious GOOD NEWS of the World Ahead--that *all* true saints are preparing to be kings and priests who will assist Christ in ruling the world (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:9-10). The Apostle Paul was inspired to warn us about this false Christianity, which was already beginning in his day: "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it"! (2 Cor. 11:4).

Unwittingly, most of us *have* "put up" with the kind of empty, namby-pamby "gospel" described above! But the *true* Gospel tells Christians to *grow* and *change*--to develop the very character of God (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16). The *true* Gospel--the *real* "Good News"--tells us that we're to be kings and priests in the soon-coming Kingdom of God (Luke 19:11-19; Rev. 20:6). Paul challenged the Corinthians, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

So, in this life, we are to wisely use the natural abilities God has given us to prepare for the GOAL of assisting Jesus Christ in bringing genuine *peace* and *joy* to this earth through a government based on God's spiritual LAW--the Ten Commandments. As *all the world* will eventually experience, we must have God's Law written in our hearts and minds now: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: '**I will put My LAW in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people**'" (Jer. 31:33).

As we actively surrender to allow God--through His Spirit--to build His very *character* within us, we should genuinely become better, kinder, more loving neighbors. We should become better, wiser, more dedicated workers or professional people. We should become more thoughtful, loving and patient fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. And we should become more zealous bondslaves of Jesus Christ in the great Work of His true Church--proclaiming the Truth to all nations.

As Paul wrote, "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 KJV). *That* is what true Christianity is all about! Not merely believing *in* Christ, but having the *Living* Jesus Christ literally LIVE within us by the power of the Holy Spirit! *That* is

Is There Hope for Me?

Many people are wrongly convinced that God could never forgive them because their sins are so awful. Yet, speaking as a sinner in serious need of forgiveness, the Prophet Micah wrote:

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God?... Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? [Micah 6:6-7].

The answer seems too good to be true:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? [v. 8].

Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, came into this world to *save* mankind--not to condemn *us*, but to condemn *sin* (cf. John 1:1,14; 3:17; Rom. 8:2-3). Our part is to *repent*, to accept Christ as our Savior, to turn toward God and His perfect law with our whole being--and to be baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). God will completely forgive *and forget* the past sins of every person who takes these actions sincerely (1 John 1:8-9). There is no limit to the mercy and goodness

what gives us the spiritual strength and love to live by God's law. It is NOT our strength. It is *Christ's* strength--His POWER and His spiritual LOVE placed within us by the Holy Spirit! For Christ LIVES within the true Christian. *That is the key!*

God will show to *every* person who seeks Him wholeheartedly (cf. Jer. 29:12-13).

Bit by bit and step by step, each of us must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Through God's help and His Spirit in us, we are to *surrender ourselves daily* to let Jesus Christ live *His* life in us.

God's Word tells us, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). Since Jesus Christ bought and paid for each of us by shedding His own blood, true Christians need to realize their responsibility to *seek God's will daily* in everything they think, say and do.

Certainly we will all stumble at times, falling short of the goal of letting Christ live in us. One must *not* be discouraged by this. It happens to *everyone*. John, the "apostle of love," wrote about this problem to the *true Christians* of his day: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

So when we "slip up" after conversion and repeat old mistakes (or make new ones!), *if* we are truly repentant and *confess* these sins to God, *He will forgive us*. Further, as John stated, God will "cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness."

Overcoming, then, *takes time*. It does not happen all at once. **That's why we must never get discouraged and give up.**

What Is a True Christian?

The Fruits of a True Christian

Jesus said, "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20). The "fruits" or *results* of God's Holy Spirit working in our lives show whether or not we are truly Christian. When Jesus was asked about the most important thing we are to do, He replied, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:37-39).

For the true Christian, God becomes the center of *everything*. The genuine Christian is really GOD-centered. He will want to please God in *all* his thoughts and actions. He will constantly remember that God is his Father and that Jesus is his Savior and High Priest.

So he will "feed" on Christ by constantly *studying* and drinking in the inspired Word of God, the Bible (cf. John 6:56-57). He will learn the habit of *seeking God in earnest prayer* as Jesus did (Mark 1:35). In all of this, he will learn to "walk with God"--to have his thoughts and actions more in tune with God and Christ every day of his Christian life.

A genuine Christian will also be led by God's Spirit to "love his neighbor *as himself*." He will strive, with God's help and guidance, to be kind, loving and giving. The *real* Christian will seek to live by Christ's instruction: "**It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive**" (Acts 20:35).

So a genuine follower of Jesus will strive to be a "giver"--to help, serve, encourage and lift up his fellow human beings. And his whole heart will be in helping to give God's precious Truth to others. As Daniel wrote, "those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who **turn many to righteousness** like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

And in his own life and personality, the Christian will, more and more, manifest the spiritual "fruit" that Paul described: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Through God's Spirit working within him, the true Christian will demonstrate love--a sincere, outflowing concern for all men--and warmth and affection for all those around him. And, as we've seen, God's love is manifested through our keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3).

Furthermore, true Christians will experience inward *joy* and *peace*, which are priceless. And all Christians will grow in the spirit of kindness, longsuffering, goodness and gentleness that the above passage describes.

Another vital fruit is *faith*--the spiritual strength to *trust in God* and demonstrate commitment to that trust in every area of life.

The final fruit of the Spirit is *self-control*--the spiritual strength to master one's sins and lusts in order to *obey God*. Again, if you truly *surrender* your heart, mind and will to God, accept Jesus Christ and are baptized in His name, you are promised the POWER of the Holy Spirit to give you this kind of strength and self-control.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Through God's Spirit, He gives us the *power* to obey His commandments. And our obedience *shows* that we have that Spirit. As John wrote, "all who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us" (1 John 3:24 NRSV).

John also states, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (2:3-6). The *Living Bible* paraphrases these last two sentences: "**That is the way to know whether or not you are a Christian. Anyone who says he is a Christian should live as Christ did.**" And, as we know, Christ KEPT His Father's commandments (John 15:10).

But *we* should not expect "perfection" in *our* lives all at once! We have already learned that we are to "GROW in grace and in knowledge." The true Christian life is one of overcoming and growing to become more like Jesus Christ--even in our innermost thoughts and desires.

But the magnificent future for the true Christian makes all our trials, tests and "growing pains" *more than worth it* (cf. Rom. 8:18).

What Is a True Christian?

Keep Your Eyes on the GOAL

If God has called *you* to true understanding and you grasp what you have been reading in this booklet, you have undoubtedly been called to be a *full son of God*. The meaning and ultimate purpose of your calling is AWESOME.

For as you daily yield your thoughts, your time, your energy and your very *life* to letting Jesus Christ live His life in you, you will be building more and more of the very character of God. Month by month and year by year, you will be learning to think, act and live *like God Himself*.

Finally, at Jesus Christ's return to this earth as King of kings, you will be either resurrected or changed from flesh into spirit. As a Spirit-born son of God, you will then join with Jesus Christ in RULING the nations of this earth (Rev. 2:26) and bringing genuine *peace* and *joy* at last!

And in your own right, you will be *glorified* as a ruling member of the Kingdom or Government of God. The Apostle John writes, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

In the resurrection, the true saints will be fully *like* Christ. They will be offered the awesome opportunity and responsibility to help rule the cities and nations of this earth. And they will have glorified spirit bodies that will enable them to do the job. For they will *never* get tired, *never* get sick, NEVER DIE!

Composed of spirit, filled with drive, energy and JOY, the resurrected saints will live forever in the very Family of God.

Thus John continues, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (v. 3).

If you would like to know more about the *glory* and *power* ahead for true Christians, then call or write today for our truly exciting booklet, *Your Ultimate Destiny*. It is offered to you *free* for the asking--just write us or call our toll-free number. And if you wish to talk to someone personally about baptism or related matters, write or call us and request a visit.

All of us who understand have every good reason to want to *yield* to the God who made us, *accept* His Son as our Savior, *surrender* our lives to live by every word of God, *keep* His commandments, allow him to *build* within us His character and so *prepare* for the real World Ahead--the soon-coming Kingdom of our God.