

Who is a Christian? What is a Christian?

Part 1 M Debono-De-Laurentis

These are two questions any rational thinking man or woman of God should be asking nowadays. What constitutes real Biblical Christianity? Is it:

- The Emerging Church?
- The Third wave movement?
- Catholicism?
- The Redefined Liberal Churches?
- Protestantism
- Mormonism?
- Faith and Prosperity

The above mentioned are only a small list chosen from over 4000 denominations of Christianity and associated Cults and Religions that call themselves Christian.

How are we defining our faith as individuals? Is it by denomination: I am a Baptist; I am a Methodist etc. or is by the teachers and leaders we choose to follow and adhere to as we are sure they are the only ones speaking the truth about Jesus.

If we say we are defining our beliefs by the denomination we follow we are without doubt accepting all that we are told as true by men who by definition of being men are fallible. By this same argument, if we are following favourite teachers we are doing the same thing.

So what is the solution? After all, we need teachers and leaders to hopefully point us in the right direction, how do we even start to understand without them? And how at the end of the day, do we know who is right? After all, they all have persuasive arguments and use of Scripture. They all claim to understand the translations from the Hebrew and Greek and they can all give masterful and '*Spirit led*' insight into the Scripture.

The next question that arises is: if they are all *led* by the Spirit, how is it that most of them contradict each other? Is the Spirit of God allowing us all to understand things differently but ultimately end up the same place? Because if that were the case we should all obviously and without doubt or controversies embrace the ecumenical movement and all become as one. After all the Scriptures tell us to be in agreement.

So, shall we just put our differences aside and agree?

These are serious questions that deserve answers. Not just the usually pat and contrite responses normally given, but some Scriptural truth and maybe a wake up call to all who profess to be Christian.

Motivation

The first thing to look at is what 'motivates us to believe what we believe'.

Right at this very moment in your life as you are reading this article, you are the sum total of your life experience. Everything you have been through in your life has had input in making you who you are today. Decisions you have made, relationships you have had and even the books you have read have helped to shape and mould you. We have all had different experiences and upbringing; we have all

had different education and even social structures as we live in different countries and societies within those countries. Because of this we all have different comfort zones. The saying goes; “one man’s meat is another man’s poison” or “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. These are very true statements I’m sure you will agree. But even our view of beauty has changed as society has a great influence upon that part of our life as well as many others without us realising it.

Today we expect our wives or girlfriends to shave their legs and under their arms as this is part of the accepted norm for the beauty regime, and of course they should be size zero as that is what clothes are made for. Yet, go back only a few years and it was the harlots that did this and men expected their wives to be hairy and cuddly.

Here in the West we do not as a whole eat insects as part of our calorie controlled diet, we would find the thought of that abhorrent, yet many cultures around the world eat insect as part of their staple food requirements. John the Baptist ate Locusts and Honey. Society and culture play a major role in our development. As Christian who are a part of the world, we are a part of the culture and society we live in also. We are called to separate ourselves from the world and be Holy before the Lord.

The question I am asking you to think about carefully is: are you taking your perceptions and ideas as to what God wants and moving them into the Church, or are you separating yourself from the world and leaving those preconceived and ungodly ways behind. Are you bringing your culture and therefore comfort zone with you and are you following preachers and teachers who tell you things you like to hear because you are listening from a Pew still firmly planted in the worldly culture you have been brought up in, or are you inside the body of Jesus Christ (Yeshua) leaving your worldly perspective behind and focusing on what the Lord is TRULY SAYING AND NOT WHAT YOU WOULD PREFER.

We are warned:

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

We go to the preachers who tell us what we are used to hearing and ‘sits right with our spirit’ and not necessarily listen to the teachers that convict of us of sin and turn our lives upside down, to the point we no longer fit God into our way of life, but turn our lives around to follow the King of the Universe. I don’t know if you have noticed but here in the west we live under a democratic society and we all get to choose. We can elect the government and we are given what we want through public consensus rather than being told what to do. At least to an extent. That is in fact in direct opposition to the kingdom of God.

God is a King, not just any King but the King of the Universe. In any Kingdom the King makes a decree and the people follow it. They do not vote on whether to follow as it not a democracy; they follow because they have to, as it has been decreed by the king. If the people did not like what their king decreed they could either 1) stand against it and end up in prison or beheaded or 2) leave the country and live elsewhere. They could not however choose what to and what not to do according to their own desires. Doing things your own way against the king was classed as treason. When a king was crowned the people would pledge their love and fealty to him. They would agree with a promise to do as they are told by the king. This was a binding promise not a whimsical ok. They would often be called up to die for their king or just to serve him as he requires. The king never gave a blessing to anything that contradicted his rulings and desires. But he would set people up in positions to fulfil his desires. How much more the King of the Universe.

So, as Christians are we following the commands and precepts of our Lord and King or are we trying to bring democracy and the will of the people into an established kingdom. With this latter attempt at following God we are in fact making Him into our image instead of being transformed into His. We are when doing this, breaking one of the Ten Commandments. We are taking something in Heaven and making an image of it on earth and worshipping it. It is an image we have created to represent a God we would prefer rather than worshipping the God that is "I AM". Needless to say this is idolatry. Are we worshipping the God of Scripture or not?

Yeshua asked the question "who do you say that I am". Did He ask this question lightly or was it a loaded question. Who do you say that Jesus is? Is He a God made in the image of man as we prefer to have Him that way, or is He the King of the Universe that turns our world upside down!

Every theologian that has ever given interpretation of Scripture has done so with an agenda. Without exception. The agenda's vary depending on the theologian. There are theologians who:

- Wish to disprove the Trinity
- Allow homosexuality
- Promote more than one wife
- Line their pockets teaching on money
- Prove Saturday worship over Sunday
- Say it is Jesus only
- There is no resurrection
- Jesus had physical children
- Mary was born without Sin
- Etc etc etc

There are of course those that have a genuine desire to expound and interpret the Word of God by His Spirit. These are the teachers we need to be listening to.

There are also those that have come in as ministers of Satan seeking whom they may devour through lies and deceptions. This of course is nothing new as it has been going on since the time Yeshua was still walking the earth and before. However, if we think about this logically we can see that through the generations a build up of deceptions and lies has left the Church in a very confused state. This is the legacy our forefathers have left us. In the church today we have everything from pagan worship festivals to Hindu Yoga and Buddhist Labyrinth Prayer walks.

So again I ask the question: are we following the King of the Universe or a Jesus' of our own design?

These questions have deep and far reaching consequences if we cannot answer them correctly, both in the body and within ourselves. If we have been led to follow a Jesus of man's design, can there be salvation in it. Is the Jesus we are being taught the Jesus of Scripture and in reality the King of the Universe. Or is He a JESUS THAT SUITS US BECAUSE He is conveniently loving and there to serve our needs. If the latter than we are no better than the pagans worshipping their gods. They would pray for their own benefit and desires and appease their gods through works to make themselves feel justified. Are we praying to a Jesus that gives us our desires and is going to church meetings our way to appease him and make ourselves feel vindicated in those prayers. Or are we seeking the true Lord and God of Scripture and what His will is for our lives.

Changing

None of us like to admit we are wrong. *I believe in Jesus so what right have you to tell me I might be wrong in the Jesus I believe?*

I ask the question in return: is it self gratified desires that are keeping us from looking at possible errors in our stance? In the Scripture this is called PRIDE, also known as the self righteous attitude.

I hear you asking: what makes you think you aren't being self righteous telling us this?

My answer is simple. I am not telling you what to believe, I am however, asking you to re-evaluate what you think and make sure through sincere prayer and study of the Word that you are clearly seeing the truth.

2Ti 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

This Scripture is not a request that can be ignored, it is a command to believers in the kingdom of God, a decree from the King if you like. You do not need to read Hebrew or Greek to have your eyes opened to the truth. It is God's Spirit that leads us into truth and we can only rely upon God at the end of the day to know the truth. The Hebrew and Greek can help us to have a deeper understanding.

Test what your teachers are teaching, examine by Scripture what is being said. Study the Scriptures in that last sermon you heard yourself and check it is correct. You may not know the agenda and bias of the teacher you have been listening to.

If you think this sounds a bit paranoid, I say, why not be paranoid. Is it not better to make sure the message we are getting from the King is genuine. That it has the royal seal stamped upon it, and not a forgery. Is it paranoid to be like the Bereans who were called more noble:

Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. If we need to be a little paranoid as the Bereans were, and they were called nobler because of it. Then I would rather we were all a little paranoid and jealous for the truth. This is the only way we can be sure we are following the truth, and not something we prefer because it "sits right with our spirit".

Remember our spirit is meant to be renewed. That means major changes as our nature is toward sin and not Godliness. If we are not shaken into major changes in our lives after every encounter with God's Word are we hearing the right thing, are we listening. Let us heed the Scripture on this, they tell us to make sure we are listening properly:

Mat 11:15 The *one* having ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 13:9 The *one* having ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 13:15 For the heart of this people has grown fat, and they heard heavily with the ears, and they have closed their eyes, that they not see with the eyes, or hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and be converted, and I heal them." *Isa. 6:9, 10*

Mat 13:16 But your eyes *are* blessed because they see; and your ears because they hear.

Mat 13:43 Then the righteous will shine out like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The *one* having ears to hear, let him hear.

Mar 4:9 And He said to them, The *one* having ears to hear, let him hear.

Mar 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

Mar 8:18 "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?" And do you not remember? *Jer. 5:21*

Many times throughout Scripture we have warning after warning about being deceived from the truth and what those people become.

Act 7:51 *Oh* stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and in the ears! You always fell against the Holy Spirit. As your fathers *did*, you also *did*.

This is talking to people who profess to know the Spirit yet come against it. This is not about unbelievers but those that claim to believe.

Act 7:51 *Oh* stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and in the ears! You always fell against the Holy Spirit. As your fathers *did*, you also *did*.

Act 7:52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those before proclaiming concerning the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become betrayers and murderers,

Act 7:53 who received the Law by the disposition of angels and did not keep *it*.

Act 7:54 And hearing these things, they were cut to their hearts and gnashed the teeth on him.

Act 7:55 But being full of *the* Holy Spirit, looking intently into the heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right of God.

Peter was telling the Jews, those that claimed to believe in the truth. Those that had heard the truth through the prophets and yet rejected it through pride. They thought they knew best because they had made God in the image of man and took Stephen outside the city and stoned Him to death. They were warned but refused to heed that warning. Don't be like the stiff necked people. Who think they know best because they like what they hear.

Be the true believer that listens to God and changes because you don't like what you hear. If the King is telling you to change, CHANGE. If you do not want to accept what the king is saying, either move away or be sited for treason. Both from the Kingdom of God are frightening concepts.

Mat 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but the *ones* who do the will of My Father in Heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many works of power?

Mat 7:23 And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; "depart from Me, those working lawlessness!"

Those that follow the will of my father in Heaven. Those that do the will of the King.

Strong words: these are the commandments of the King of the Universe to be followed. Not a re-created king to suit ourselves. Are you following the King or are you one of the workers of lawlessness. Those that stand before the throne in this scenario believing right up till that point that they are saved and all is well. They are shocked when they find they are not.

They proclaim Jesus, they do mighty works, and they even perform miracles in His Name. We come back again to Jesus' question: who do you say that I am?

Continued in part 2