

Who is a Christian? What is a Christian?

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In part 1 we asked a number of searching questions. In part 2 we will try to answer some of them, but in doing so we will find more questions. Questions bring answers but answers also bring more questions. This is how we learn. If we are not asking questions, especially as believers then what are we learning? I have found that asking questions leads to answers, but I have also found that the answers aren't usually liked much because they mean we have to change, and in some cases make no sense so we have ask in another way. Due to this we tend to ignore the answer and seek one that is more comfortable to us and 'sits right'.

As Christians we do this all the time. Scientists do it all the time (look at the evolution issue). None of us will admit that we do it because we all hate to be wrong. That is all part of the pride issue and dying to self. If dying to self was easy we would have no problems as Christians and our walk would be easy. We all have our preconceived ideas and world view that we want to maintain, so when we become believers we tend to hone in on the teachings that are most comfortable with that view. Whether or not that teaching is truly salvation led or not.

To blindly accept the statements of teachers and preachers simply on the grounds that they are instructing you leaves you open to receive any agenda they may have to pass across. You become a slave to that persons influence. The reason you become a slave to that influence is that it sits comfortably with the world view you would prefer to have. Not necessarily the view of the King of the Universe. The only influence we should be influenced by is the Holy Spirit leading into all truth. However, we have already ascertained that the teachers today are claiming to be showing the truth by the Spirit, yet, they contradict each other. This begs the question: what spirit are they led by? Surely by reason of logic and sanity they cannot all be led by the same Spirit as the Scriptures and our Lord and King are not divided against themselves.

Something must be wrong!

So who is right?

There are quite a number of doctrinal issues between various denominations that appear to contradict each other, or at least are interpreted in different ways.

Interpretation

Interpretation is connected to our understanding of Scripture, but we also have to look at why certain verses and texts are interpreted in certain ways. From a Hellenistic mindset, in other words the way Gentiles think, we have a great need to understand things theologically. When we believe we have found that viewpoint in Scripture we say 'AHA' this makes sense so this is the way we interpret. Unfortunately that actually limits God back down to the man made idol god to be worshipped in a limited way.

In Judaism, which by the way is the root of our faith, the Rabbi's had a saying: there are 70 ways to interpret Scripture. This does not mean literally 70 ways but it is pointing out that there are several ways to interpret.

E.g.

- Is it poetic?
- Is it historic
- Is it prophetic

From a Judaic perspective they can in fact be all three be true. Our western mindset and interpretive techniques are fine as far as they go. However when we say 'Eureka' we've found it we have actually only found the tip of the iceberg. We limit God to a figure we can understand, we also limit His word down to levels we feel we are comfortable with. Some of these issues that are hotly debated however are not salvation issues: Do we worship on a Saturday or a Sunday? Do we practice the Lords supper weekly or quarterly? etc. these are things to debate and discuss yes, but they do not of themselves define who we say the Messiah is. It is the descriptions of His personality and deity, what He did on the Cross and the details of regeneration and sanctification. Why He did what He did and who He says that He is that should define what we actually believe.

The alpha course teaches a form of the Gospel but does not give the whole truth. To get saved by the Jesus of the alpha course is no salvation at all. Without a full understanding of the Messiah and His atoning work we cannot make a properly informed decision about His claims as to who He is. We end up with another Jesus, one that is easier to believe in because this Jesus doesn't really change us but forgives us and loves us and pampers to our needs. It is said that you can tell something about someone by the friends they keep, the Pope is a friend of the alpha course, he sees nothing contradictory to catholic doctrine in it. This in itself should be a warning. If it is not then you are not asking enough questions or listening to the answers because you don't like them.

If we say the Bible is infallible and inspired by an infinite God. Are we not missing the fact that the Scriptures have more for us to understand than just what we initially see on the surface? I am not talking about codes or Kabbalah, but a depth of knowledge leading to a fulfilling relationship with the Messiah.

Let's look at one particular issue logically from Scripture. After all if we are created in God's image He must also have Logic and done things logically. What that really means in Biblical terminology is "Sound Mind" and "decently and in order".

As we look through the Old Testament we come across Scriptures that prove that the TORAH or the five books of Moses are THE WAY, THE TRUTH and THE LIFE. Yet when we look in the New Testament we see the Yeshua (Jesus) is THE WAY, THE TRUTH and THE LIFE. Is this a contradiction? Well yes it is if we do not ask more questions and look for deeper answers. We could stop here and say: Jesus now replaces the Old Covenant and God has finished with the Old Testament, therefore we now have the basis and foundation of our understanding. This is in fact what we see being taught in many churches and denominations today (Dominionism etc).

The Word is so much deeper than man and we need to think deeper and outside our preferred paradigm to understand what is said. Looking in depth we see that another statement was made in the New Testament which if we realise it ties these two events together.

"Jesus is the Word made flesh"

Only the TORAH can be that Word. If Yeshua is now the word made flesh then we have to logically assume that the Word is more than just text and letters in a certain order, but a part of God. A part we can see, touch and learn from by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A part He has given us for generations to guide us and teach us. It says in the Scripture that the Word will never come back void, how can it when God is in His Word.

It is no coincidence that the Bible is the most read book in the world. Nor is it a surprise that Satan's favourite place to attack the believer is through the Word. His forms of attacks come through his ministers masquerading as Angels of light. What this means is he will take normal people with a desire for spirituality (of which we know there are many) and deceive them into a belief in a Jesus that is nothing to do with the Jesus of the Bible. He will then give them a charismatic approach to the Bible and a personality that people want to follow. We are like sheep we are told and so we are. These charismatic characters are sent out amongst the flock to deceive and lead astray. They do this by teaching to our fleshly self, the self that we are supposed to die to, and then lead the flock into a relationship with a false Jesus.

This does not mean that those that were truly brought into salvation with a genuine conversion are lost. What it does mean however is that their testimony, their witness becomes distorted and they become ineffective as evangelists as the gospel that they are led into sharing does not lead to salvation. Satan is the father of lies; he is also the god of this world. To dismiss his abilities and deception lightly is to be deceived. Simply saying "I have discernment" leaves you wide open to the very attacks and deceptions I am speaking of. Without the Spirit in our life to reveal the way, without dying to self, without being willing to admit we might be wrong and without our own individual study of the Word we are all susceptible to the deceptions around us. Yes we are meant to be sheep, but we are also to judge all things spiritual and test it to see if it is of God. If we don't test them we are likely to be sucked straight into the devils deceptions against the church. These are the first step towards good judgment and a realistic relationship with the God of the Universe.

Questions need to be asked, hard questions. It is not up to other people to ask them but each of US as individuals. If we don't ask them and look for the answers, how do we know someone else is giving us the answers to the right questions, or even leading us to question at all? One of Satan's favourite lies is to convince the flock not to question. How many church leaders are out there today that tell you not to come against God's anointed: in other words don't question them. When you examine these teachers and their doctrines closely, they are not tied together with Scripture but pretty ribbons that look good and cater to your natural man. They tell you, 'you can be rich and have your earthly desires' the proviso of course being that you give your money to the anointed minister that you are not allowed to question what he teaches. This Jesus is one most people want as we would all love to have our desires granted. However Jesus is not a genie in a bottle, He does not grant us all our wishes.

The question is: do you want to feel good? Or do you want to serve the King of the Universe and stand before Yeshua one day, recognised and accepted. Salvation and the reality of eternity is far too big an issue to take lightly or play with. Don't let your Christian walk be a game of Russian Roulette.

Thinking and questioning is one of the most important things we can do as believers. It is how we grow: what does that Scripture mean for me? How must I change to come in line with what my King wants? Is what I have been told true or something from the father of lies that has led to the deception of many in the church? Am I asking God what He wants from me? Am I only asking God for my needs and giving money and time on a Sunday to feel better about it?

We need to constantly examine ourselves, daily, it is a battle that we are constantly fighting. Have you asked the right questions of yourself? Have you been honest with yourself? What are your motivations for believing the way you do? The answers to these questions have serious consequences. If we cannot answer them correctly or truthfully we may be putting our eternity at stake.

Yeshua asked “Who do you say that I am?”

How do you answer that question? Is it with an honest ‘picking up of your cross and carrying it’ a ‘dying to self’ and a hunger for the truth no matter how that means you have to work at changing: or are you happy with God because you feel He is giving you your desires and you can appease Him with your finances and time on a Sunday morning and maybe a midweek prayer meeting. After all the midweek prayer meeting is praying for others. Is this another appeasement of guilt for the self or is it a genuine desire for fellowship and the truth.

The first thing anyone is tempted to say when reading this article is “of course that’s not me” I know I am right. The question is: whose eyes are you right in? Your own - or Gods?

Maybe it’s best to think about this and be sure. Jesus promises us a sure and certain hope, but it is only by one particular Jesus this can be done. The Word made flesh and not the word made corrupt by the father of lies.

If these questions frighten you and make you think about who you are and who you say Jesus is then I have achieved what I set out to do. We are all told to think as believers, test all and not just accept all. If you are accepting everything because it feels right then it is time to question the reality of your relationship with the Messiah and the teaching you are receiving. If you are comfortable in your faith then perhaps you have not had the earthshaking, life changing Word of the living God shown to you in a way that makes you tremble and desire to serve Him. “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of WISDOM”. You may be right, I am not judging your faith or your salvation, after all I don’t know you and we may never meet.

But you know you, and only you can determine if you love the Lord your God with all your soul and all your might and all your strength, or if you love a God that serves you because He is only a God of Love and not judgement as that was the Old Testament God.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

My final question is: are you?