

GOD'S DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN: ACTS 11:26

There are various definitions given of a Christian. The only one that is worthwhile is God's definition. The only kind of Christian worthwhile is the one as defined by God. The reason for saying this is God's definition of a Christian is because of the meaning of *chrematizo*, translated "called." It is not a nickname, as claimed by some. "And it was in Antioch that the disciples first received the name Christian" (Weymouth). The Greek word rendered *called* implies a divine source. IT is "to be divinely instructed, to receive a warning or revelation from God" (Green's Greek-English Lexicon). "To give a response to those consulting an oracle, to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven; to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed; to be the mouth-piece of divine revelations, to promulgate the commands of God" (Thayer).

The word is found nine times in the New Testament (Matthew 2:12; 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 8:5; 11:7; 12:25; Romans 7:3; Acts 11:26). In all of these instances it has reference to divine revelation, unless Acts 11:26 is an exception. The meaning of the word fits Isaiah 62:2: "*Which the mouth of Jehovah shall name.*" Compare Romans 7:3: "*She shall be called an adulteress.*" Who calls her an adulteress? Compare "*Defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name*" (Daniel 9:19). In Israel, we have the root *Elohim*, the Hebrew name for God, which supplies an explanation for the statement, "*Thy people are called by thy name.*" Amos 9:12 and Acts 15:27 are equivalents. Thus the subject: "God's Definition of a Christ."

Why was not this name given at Pentecost? I may not know, but I can think of a reason. *Christian* is the sum of Christianity. Christianity is not Jewish, not peculiar to Jews. This is implied in the very fact that the term that most describes Christianity was not given until the Gentiles were brought in. Thus, those who think of Christianity offering something yet for Jews in a special way have not properly understood Christianity.

A Christian is one who heard the Gospel and believed it (Acts 11:19-21). Why were there no Christians in Antioch prior to this time? There were not any that had heard the Gospel and believed before this. Only those that believed the Gospel became Christians. There were no more Christians in Antioch than there were people that believed the Gospel. What was true in Antioch is true in any location.

A Christian is one that is indebted to others (Acts 11:20). Someone had to bring the Gospel to them. If those who came to Antioch had always stayed in Jerusalem, there would have been no church in Antioch. If those who came to Antioch had remained silent, there still would have been no church in Antioch. In every place where there is a congregation, the people that constitute that congregation are indebted to someone somewhere for bringing the Gospel to that community. The people in Antioch should have been, and no doubt were, grateful to those who brought the Gospel to them. We should never forget those who have made it possible for us to have the Gospel.

A Christian is one that wants to teach the Gospel to others (Acts 11:20). This is one of the characteristics of New Testament Christianity. Acts is not really just a book of conversions but a book on sharing redemption. Think who are the main characters. Though the principles of conversion are found in the book, this is because we see the church carrying the Gospel to the lost. We have seen what to do to be saved but not what it means to be saved. One that is not interested in teaching the Gospel to others is not a Christian as defined by God.

A Christian is one that talks the Bible (Acts 11:19). The word translated *preaching* in the KJV is translated *speaking* in the ASV. The idea is that they simply talked or their conversation was about the Word. We talk about each other, about politics, the weather, but how often do we talk about the Bible? Even Christians when together very seldom discuss the Bible.

A Christian is one that is not concerned about who gets credit for good that is done (Acts 11:19-20). The only name mentioned in this verse is Stephen's and he was not among those that started the church in Antioch. Who started the church in Antioch? We do not know. No name is given. Yet, this is an outstanding congregation in Acts. Is not the very silence of the Bible as to the names of those that started the church in Antioch a rebuke to preeminence-loving brethren today? What the church needs more today than

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

O ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON

Text: _____

- I. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- II. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- III. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- IV. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- V. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- VI. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- VII. His Love was Seen Through His _____
- VIII. His Love was Seen Through His _____

**JONAH: GOD’S FAITHLESS AND MERCILESS
SERVANT**

Text: _____

- I. Jonah’s _____
- II. Jonah’s _____
- III. Jonah’s _____
- IV. Jonah’s _____
- V. Jonah’s _____
- VI. Jonah’s _____
- VII. Jonah’s _____
- VIII. Jonah’s _____

WHAT SUITS YOUR GIVING?

The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins.

A courtier, astonished at his generosity, commented, “Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar’s need. Why give him gold?”

Alexander responded in royal fashion, “Copper coins would suit the beggar’s need, but gold coins suit Alexander’s giving.”

perhaps anything else is people who will do the work and never care who gets credit for it. Really, God got the credit for the beginning of the church in Antioch, and He is the only One we should be concerned about getting credit anyway. These men may never have written their names in the history books, but they wrote them in the Book of Life.

A Christian is one that is not a quitter (Acts 11:19). They knew the value of being a Christian. It was worth any price. Compare this with what little things will cause Christians to quit today. Then, you could not find anything that would cause them to quit. Now, just about anything will cause them to quit.

A Christian is one with a supreme purpose (Acts 11:23). “That which purpose of heart.” That is the meaning of Matthew 6:33: not that one never does anything but attend service but rather everything that he does contributes toward this end. This is the meaning of Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 2:2. Everything is related to this overriding motive. “*This one thing I do*” (Philippians 3:13), not that Paul just did one thing, but everything he did was ruled by this principle.

A Christian is one where the grace of God in his life is visible (Acts 11:23). Was there a question in Barnabas’ mind as to what effect Christianity had in the lives of the Gentiles? If so when he saw their lives he was convinced Paul could see the effect of God’s grace in the Macedonians (II Corinthians 8:1).

A Christian is a good person (Acts 11:24). Barnabas was among those named Christians at Antioch. A mean Christians is a contradiction of terms—there is no such thing. One cannot be a mean father, mother, son, or daughter and be a Christian. One cannot be mean to his brethren and be a Christian. Think of the spirit of the elder brother (Luke 15). Yet how many treat their brethren about like the elder brother treated his brother, and still claim to be Christians.

A Christian is one that assembles (Acts 11:26; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42). The Christians at Antioch assembled. The Christians in every place assemble.

A Christian is one that accepts responsibility (Acts 11:29). Note the words—every man—determined—according to his ability. They did not seek to do as little as they could but as much as they could. Many seem to think today that a Christian is one who does as little as he can. A Christian does not shirk responsibility.

A Christian is one in the Lord’s church (Acts 11:26). There were no Christians in Antioch that were not members of the church. There were no Christians in Antioch that were members of any other church. “*I give mine house and within my walls...a name*” (Isaiah 56:5). The church is God’s house (I Timothy 3:15; Acts 2:42; Galatians 3:26-27). Are you a Christian defined by God?

-Franklin Camp

THE BOOK OF MISDIRECTION

It is one of the most beloved Bible stories of all time. Most children, even those not in a Christian environment, have heard of the events of his life. Many can recite the account with ease, and the theme is taught repeatedly from pulpits, lecterns, and classroom tables. Jonah forsook God and had to pay the resulting consequences. However, Jonah is not myth, legend, or tale fraught with fiction, but a real and true life account of a prophet of God gone awry. Though the account as a whole is always represented rightfully, sometimes depth is not reached in considering the book of Jonah thus there arises a need to investigate certain aspects of his life, work, and purpose for what he did.

Jonah identifies himself in verse one as the son of Amittai. In this book, that is the entirety of his personal information. However, this identification confirms that he is the prophet also of II Kings 14:25-27 where further information can be gleaned. In addition to the name of his father, it is stated that he was from Gath-heper, a town three miles northeast of Nazareth in Galilee. But the most drawing fact found is that he prophesied in the days of Jereboam II's reign in Israel. This knowledge gives the ability to date the life and work of Jonah, which history would indicate to be between 790 and 750 B.C. Therefore he lived and worked just decades prior to Israel's eventual demise at the hands of Assyria. And lo and behold, to whom does Jonah prophesy? Assyria.

It is widely recognized as stated by the text that Jonah was commissioned by God to go down to Nineveh and preach repentance to the dwellers of the city. However, what often is not likewise provided is the knowledge that Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. Knowing this, allows a hint of understanding as to Jonah's hesitancy in going to condemn these people. This is not said to justify Jonah's rebellion against God, but to simply recognize the possible reasons that are not stated in the book itself. Assyria was a people well known world-wide for their cruelty toward their enemies. Rex A. Turner, Sr. recorded that,

“Assyrians found satisfaction in torturing captives, in blinding children before the eyes of their parents, in flaying men alive, in wasting them in kilns, in chaining them in cages for the amusement of the population, and then sending the survivors off to execution.”

Proof of such inhuman treatment has been proven by carvings found at Nineveh that show men being impaled, flayed, and having their tongues torn out. In fact, Turner records of one that “shows a king gouging out the eyes of prisoners with a lance while he holds their heads completely in place with a cord passed through their lips.” To say the least, the Assyrians were cruel and ferocious in their dealings with enemies. Now with this background information one can see the basis upon which Jonah made his decision to forsake God and flee to Tarshish.

Perhaps one of the greatest controversies surrounding Jonah's record is the contention among many who say that it is merely fictional because the events recorded are impossible. The argument is that a man could not be swallowed by a creature no matter the size and survive three days and nights inside, therefore these writings are just allegorical concerning the nation of Israel. However, two facts overrule any argument man may use to discredit this book. First, with God all things are possible. In the natural realm it may not be possible for this event to have happened (speaking for myself, I do not know). However, Jonah 1:17 instructs the reader that “...*the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.*” Therefore because God prepared it, it was possible. Second, though, is the fact that Christ drew on this event in Jonah's life to explain to his disciples how that Jonah's presence in that fish three days and nights foreshadowed Christ being in the earth (buried) three days and nights. For Christ to draw upon an example that was merely figurative would have been without merit, for if Jonah's presence in the fish was only figurative so then would Christ's. Such is utter foolishness because just as Christ was in the earth, so then was Jonah in the fish. Jonah's account is absolute historical truth!

As with all Bible books, the importance lies within Christ and redemption through Him being related within it. And as was stated above, Christ is very much pictured in Jonah. “*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here*” (Matthew 12:40-41).

The unjustifiable wrong performed by Jonah is so well known, but not easily avoided. We all have our own “Nineveh's” in life that sometimes contrary to the will of God we attempt to avoid. Let us rather learn from Jonah's mistake and march boldly forth into battle for the great King of our souls.

-Andy Brewer