

MISSED, MISQUOTED, & MISUNDERSTOOD?

Part 7

Why are there so many Christian Denominations? What are the differences? What should I stay away from?

First, let's go back and make sure we define what is a "christian" based on God's Word.

Q. What is a Christian?

A. Christian defined

In short a christian is someone who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, that was prophesied that HE would come, die to atone for humanity's sins and rise up from the dead. The term christian originates from the Greek word Christianos, which means "follower/imitator of Christ" or "belonging to Christ". This means emulating the life of Jesus and obeying His Words, the Bible, in word and deed.

The word "Christian" appears three times in the New Testament of the Bible:

Acts 11:26 KJV

*26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.***

Acts 11:26 AMPC

*26 And when he had found him, he brought him back to Antioch. For a whole year they assembled together with and were guests of the church and instructed a large number of people; **and in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.***

Acts 26:28 AMPC

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, You think it a small task to make a Christian of me [just offhand to induce me with little ado and persuasion, at very short notice].

Acts 26:28 KJV

*28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me **to be a Christian.***

1 Peter 4:16 AMPC

*16 But if [one is ill-treated and suffers] **as a Christian** [which he is contemptuously called], let him not be ashamed, but give glory to God that he is [deemed worthy to suffer] in this name.*

1 Peter 4:16 KJV

*16 Yet if any man suffer **as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

Background and Context

First Used: As noted in Acts, the term was first given to believers by outsiders in the city of Antioch, rather than chosen by the disciples themselves.

Early Names: Before the label "Christian" became common, early believers referred to themselves using terms like "disciples," "believers," "brethren," "saints," or "followers of the Way."

Meaning: The suffix “ian” means "belonging to the party of" or "follower of," so a Christian literally means a follower/imitator or partisan of Christ.

As a “christian” or imitator of Christ we need to know the commands. Jesus said, if we really loved Him or the Word we would keep or obey the Word and what it commands us to do.

John 14:15 AMPC

15 If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.

Paul instructed the followers, believers or brethren to imitate the example that Jesus gave us or revealed to us by coming to earth in the flesh.

John 1:14 AMPC

14 And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth.

1 Corinthians 11:1-5 AMPC

11 Pattern yourselves after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah).

Ephesians 5:1-2 AMPC

1 Therefore be imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father].

2 And walk in love, [esteeming and delighting in one another] as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a slain offering and sacrifice to God [for you, so that it became] a sweet fragrance.

1 Corinthians 11:1-5 AMPC

11 Pattern yourselves after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah).

Paul said that the pattern we are to follow is the person of Jesus Christ (Paul said follow him and he followed God's Word). Paul clearly stated to follow the Word and not a religion as he once did. Religion always changes God's Word.

John 1:1 AMPC

1 In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.

John 14:6 AMPC

6 Jesus said to him, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by (through) Me.

Psalms 119:105 AMPC

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

John 17:17 AMPC

17 Sanctify them [purify, consecrate, separate them for Yourself, make them holy] by the Truth; Your Word is Truth.

Religion(s) and or christian denominations alway change the rules to mirror culture...when you stop follow the Truth that never changes you are left with “things” that will alway change.

Denomination defined: An organized religious group or subgroup with its own specific beliefs and practices under a broader faith. They differ in their specific rules, history, leadership style, and ways of worship.

Note: _____

How can “christian” denotations differ in their beliefs, rules, and sins and still be called an imitator of Christ?... Jesus has and will never change!

Hebrews 13:8 AMPC

8 Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is [always] the same, yesterday, today, [yes] and forever (to the ages).

Malachi 3:6 AMPC

6 For I am the Lord, I do not change;

What are the major categories of the “christian” religion?

The following is the major and not an exhaustive list which can also be broken down into several sub categories. From catholicism, evangelicalism, calvinism, arminianism... it can get very confusing to know what they all stand for but then knowing that these “christian” denominations are constantly changing their rules, guidelines, sins, but, God’s Word never changes.

Roman Catholic

O Roman Catholic churches are often just called “Catholic,” which means “universal” or “all-encompassing.” The “Roman” refers to the primacy placed on the pope, or bishop of Rome. The sanctuaries include various statues and images for veneration.

O Confession to a Priest: The concept of confession of sin to a priest is nowhere taught in Scripture. The temple veil tearing in two at Jesus’ death was symbolic of the dividing wall between God and humanity being destroyed. We can approach God directly, ourselves, without the use of a human mediator. Why? Because Jesus Christ is our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15; 10:21) and the only mediator between us and God (1 Timothy 2:5).

O 2023 Vatican declaration approved by Pope Francis, priests are permitted to offer brief, informal pastoral blessings to same-sex couples.

O Teach purgatory (not in the Bible) “a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God’s grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions.” In other words, in Catholic theology purgatory is the place where a Christian’s soul goes after death to be cleansed of the sins that had not been fully paid for during life. This doctrine of purgatory is contrary to God’s Word.

O The Roman Catholic Church has developed a specific view of the Eucharist (“transubstantiation”), which describes the bread and wine as being changed at consecration into the physical body and blood of Christ.

O The Roman Catholic canon contains intertestamental books not included in the Protestant canon: Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, and additions to Esther and Daniel.

Note: False prophet will come from the Catholic Church. (Revelation chapter 13, 17 and 18)

Eastern Orthodoxy

O Ruled by a group of bishops (synods) rather than one single leader. Split from the Roman Catholic Church in the year 1054. Rejects the Pope but shares a focus on holy tradition and icons with Catholics. The Eastern Orthodox Churches place a high priority on the particulars of liturgical worship (called The Divine Liturgy) Sanctuaries include various icons for veneration. They also believe in praying to saints and to Mary.

O Similar to the catholic church in many areas or its practices... the Eastern Orthodox churches are often just called “orthodox” or described by nationality or geography, such as the Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox, or Antiochian Orthodox.

Protestant (mainline)

O A Protestant is generally considered a member of any of the Western Christian churches that separated from the Roman Catholic Church during the 16th-century protestant reformation or any group descended from them. The Reformation: Broke away from the Catholic Church in the 1500s to return strictly to biblical teachings and it teach that salvation is a free gift from God received through faith alone, not by works or rituals.

O The movement began in 1517 when German monk Martin Luther wrote a list of complaints against the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The word “protestant” comes from a 1529 political protest by German princes and cities that disagreed with the Catholic Church's attempt to suppress Luther's teachings.

Note: All evangelicals are a subset of Protestantism, meaning every evangelical is a Protestant, but not all Protestants are evangelical. Protestant is the broad family of churches from the 16th-century Reformation. Evangelical is a specific movement within Protestantism focused on a "born-again" conversion, strict biblical authority, and active sharing of the faith (to evangelize and be a witness)

Evangelical

O The word evangelical means relating to the Christian gospel, coming from the Greek word euangelion, which means "good news". They believe the Bible is the highest and truest guide for faith and that a person must be born again: A person must choose to turn to God/Jesus (the Word) and experience/live out a personal spiritual change. In addition, one of the core defining characteristics of an evangelical is sharing their faith, the follower or imitator of Christ has a duty to actively tell others about Jesus in word and deed.

Note: There are independent and/or non-denominational Christians churches as well. These churches typically classified under the larger umbrella of the protestant category with many being identified as evangelical. Non-denominational Christian churches and Independent Christian churches are very similar in how they govern themselves, but they can have important differences in their specific theological beliefs. Both reject central headquarters and church hierarchies, operating as self-governing local bodies. **Many are rooted in eternal security.**

Within the protestant movement (including evangelicals) there are two general sub classifications or ideologies: Calvinism and Arminianism which are classified as soteriological systems. Calvinism is tied to Reformed theology, while Arminianism forms the basis of traditions like Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement.

Calvinism: Emphasizes divine sovereignty, often remembered by the acronym TULIP.

(Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints). This is associated with the “once saved always saved”, “predestination” or “eternal security” ideology that states there is nothing a person can do to lose their salvation if you have made a commitment to Jesus.

Arminianism: emphasizes human responsibility and free will, teaching that your eternity is conditional based on faith, habitually obedience in combination with grace the someone can choose to resist after making a commitment to follow Jesus.

Below is a “general” list of the Protestant and or Evangelical specific churches. Catholic or Orthodoxy will have the name of it’s origin listed with it’s church identifier typically.

Protestant:

- ☐ Methodist
- ☐ Lutheran
- ☐ Episcopal
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ United Church of Christ
- ☐ American Baptist Church

Evangelical:

- ☐ SBC Baptist (Baptist)
- ☐ Assemblies of God
- ☐ Church of God
(Cleveland Tennessee)
- ☐ Calvary Chapel
- ☐ Four Square
- ☐ Church of Christ

Note: _____

What to look out for in general regarding sin, judgment, righteousness and the “things” to come that were Prophesied?

John 16:8,13 AMPC

8 And when He comes, He will convict and convince the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness (uprightness of heart and right standing with God) and about judgment:

13 But when He, the Spirit of Truth (the Truth-giving Spirit) comes, He will guide you into all the Truth (the whole, full Truth). For He will not speak His own message [on His own authority]; but He will tell whatever He hears [from the Father; He will give the message that has been given to Him], and He will announce and declare to you the things that are to come [that will happen in the future].

Many of today's protestant (mainline) churches no longer believe same sex marriage is a sin. **Note:** This could vary at some churches and or pastors. Protestant church are not only performing same sex marriage but are also ordaining homosexual and lesbian pastors.

Although protestant (mainline) churches are known to adhere to the rules, the adherence is not to the Bible but to their specific religion or denomination. As a result of this, they typically will not speak about the rapture of the church, millennium reign of Christ and are more closely aligned with the Catholic Church and Orthodox churches regarding saved by works based on their religious ideology and affiliation. The protestant church in general, has changed greatly from it's beginning and tend to follow the edicts of the religious governing bodies over the neve changing Word of God.

Many of the evangelical churches no longer center their beliefs and practices on the "gospel" or the "good news" of salvation through Jesus Christ. They typically pursue an experience of heightened emotion without the transformational life to prove they are followers or imitator of Jesus Christ.

There has been a major shift in the evangelical movement away from holiness, no longer speaking about sin, judgment and righteousness but an emphasis on “eternal security”. The “once saved always saved” ideology may not be identified directly, however it is the unspoken message of today evangelical church.

Many evangelical churches no longer preach or teach on the rapture, the second coming, have turned political and not Biblical. From the down playing of end time events that is throughout the New Testament which is brought forward from the Old Testament: pastors preachers and teachers explain away scripture as allegory, fictional stories and speak of sin as if a one time hand raise to follow Christ means a person is guaranteed a spot in heaven.

The evangelical church has turned into a social club, a music and emotional experience instead of a life changing experience where we die to our carnal old way of living and put on the new person that is commanded to habitually imitate Jesus, the Word.

Note: _____

What are some key “things” that I should find out from a church/ministry?

- ☐ Where do they stand on same sex marriage
- ☐ Is homosexuality a sin
- ☐ Do they ordain homosexual and lesbian pastors
- ☐ Do they believe in the rapture of the church
- ☐ Do they preach about: sin, judgement and righteousness
- ☐ Do they believe in the 7 year tribulation
- ☐ Do they believe in End Time Prophecy
- ☐ Do they believe in the Millennium reign of christ
- ☐ Do they teach about heaven and hell
- ☐ Do they teach on habitual obedience and disobedience
- ☐ Do they teach once saved always saved

From the answers to these questions you can easily find out if that church/ministry believes that God’s Word is true. The Bible contrasts man-made religious systems, legalism, and outward tradition with a genuine, living relationship with Jesus Christ. Rather than endorsing a religion of strict rules, Jesus and the Apostles challenged the religious establishment of their day to focus instead on an inward heart transformation that lead to an outward life transformation.

Matthew 15:8-9 AMPC

8 These people draw near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts hold off and are far away from Me.

9 Uselessly do they worship Me, for they teach as doctrines the commands of men.

Matthew 23:27-28 AMPC

27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you are like tombs that have been whitewashed, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything impure.

28 Just so, you also outwardly seem to people to be just and upright but inside you are full of pretense and lawlessness and iniquity.

Mark 7:8 AMPC

8 You disregard and give up and ask to depart from you the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men [keeping it carefully and faithfully].

Colossians 2:20-23 AMPC

20 If then you have died with Christ to material ways of looking at things and have escaped from the world's crude and elemental notions and teachings of externalism, why do you live as if you still belong to the world? [Why do you submit to rules and regulations?—such as]

21 Do not handle [this], Do not taste [that], Do not even touch [them],

22 Referring to things all of which perish with being used. To do this is to follow human precepts and doctrines.

23 Such [practices] have indeed the outward appearance [that popularly passes] for wisdom, in promoting self-imposed rigor of devotion and delight in self-humiliation and severity of discipline of the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh (the lower nature). [Instead, they do not honor God but serve only to indulge the flesh.]

Philippians 3:7-9 AMPC

7 But whatever former things I had that might have been gains to me, I have come to consider as [one combined] loss for Christ's sake.

8 Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One),

9 And that I may [actually] be found and known as in Him, not having any [self-achieved] righteousness that can be called my own, based on my obedience to the Law's demands (ritualistic uprightness and supposed right standing with God thus acquired), but possessing that [genuine righteousness] which comes through faith in Christ (the Anointed One), the [truly] right standing with God, which comes from God by [saving] faith.

Romans 12:2 AMPC

2 Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

Matthew 24:5 AMPC

5 For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray.

2 Peter 3:11, 14 AMPC

11 Since all these things are thus in the process of being dissolved, what kind of person ought [each of] you to be [in the meanwhile] in consecrated and holy behavior and devout and godly qualities,

14 So, beloved, since you are expecting these things, be eager to be found by Him [at His coming] without spot or blemish and at peace [in serene confidence, free from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts].

Note: _____



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