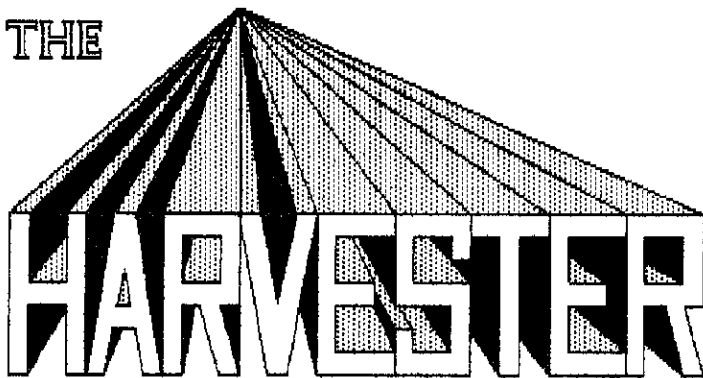


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

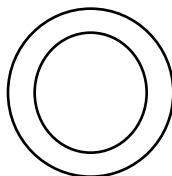
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AND THE DISCIPLES WERE CALLED ...

In this article we wish to explore the biblical definition of a Christian. What exactly is a Christian? Certainly this is a worthy question for anyone interested in spiritual things. And because of its nature, this is a question that can only be answered by the One above. We will not seek our solution through the dictionary. Neither will we turn to any man-written texts such as creed books or disciplines or commentaries or similar manuals. The Bible is the only document that contains

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books authored by God himself and this is where we must claim our answer to the important query, "What is a Christian?"

The beginning of our study takes us to a passage where the term "Christian" was first used in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. *"And when he <Barnabas> had found him <Saul>, 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) This verse clearly states that Christians were "*the disciples*". But now, what were "disciples"? Can we gain further insight into this new term to discover what a Christian is? Let us limit our search again to the Holy Word of God.

The word "disciple" is basically a New Testament term in the KJV. It appears only once in the Old Testament -- in Isaiah 8:16 and there it is used in a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. All other appearances of "disciple" or "disciples" occur in the four accounts of the Gospel and in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

A quick examination tells us that in Bible times "disciples" were learners or pupils, much as they are today. During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught His disciples and the multitudes (Matt. 5:1-2). Disciples were taught the meaning of certain parables (Matt. 13:36), along with other truths. It is also evident that disciples were followers. As we look at the example of Jesus' disciples.

they characteristically "followed" Him everywhere He went: Jerusalem, Jericho, Galilee, and even into a ship (Matt. 8:23)! But more significantly, they "followed" the teachings of their master.

Was Jesus the only person mentioned in the Bible that had disciples or followers? Not quite. There were many different disciples who belonged to different teachers (leaders). In addition to disciples of Jesus (Matt. 27:57), some were disciples of Moses (John 9:28), disciples of John the Baptizer (Matt. 9:14), and disciples of the Pharisees (Luke 5:33). Further, disciples could be either male or female. In Acts 9:1-2 it is implied that the "*disciples of the Lord*" consisted of both men and women, while later in the chapter Tabitha was specifically referred to as a "*disciple*" in Acts 9:36.

In summary then, disciples were pupils who followed and imitated their teacher. Does this mean that any "disciple" is a Christian since "*the disciples were called Christians*" in Acts 11:26? No! Since there were different teachers whom the disciples followed and thus, different disciples existed as noted above, we must distinguish WHICH "*disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*". As the name simply implies, those disciples who followed Christ were the ones referred to by the term "Christian".

To take it another step further, those disciples or members who made up the church in Antioch were the ones who were called Christians. The book of Acts

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this clear connection between the disciples of Christ and the early church. For example, as the number of disciples increased, so did the church (Acts 6:1,7). When Saul was converted and therefore, he quit binding "*disciples*" (Acts 9:1), we read that the "*churches*" (as well as the disciples) had rest (Acts 9:31). There were "*disciples*" in places like Damascus (Acts 9:19), Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), and Joppa (Acts 9:38), which coincidentally had churches, too! Finally, the "*church*" and "*disciples*" mentioned in Acts 14:27-28 were obviously synonymous terms as they were also in Acts 11:26. We can correctly conclude, then, that a member of the Lord's body or church was also a disciple of Christ which, in turn, means he was a "Christian".

It is interesting to note that the term "disciple" did not appear in any of the epistles after the book of Acts. The Apostle Paul addressed many of his letters to "*the saints*", to "*the church*", to "*the sanctified*", and to "*the faithful brethren*", which are other descriptions of Christians. Peter also addressed his letters, not to "*disciples*", but to "*the strangers scattered ...*" (1 Pet. 1:1),

unquestionably recalling how the early church was "scattered" due to persecutions of Christians (Acts 8:1,4 and Acts 11:19). Even Jude dismissed the term "disciple" for *"them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:"* (Jude 1).

Equally mysterious is the fact that we do not see the word "Christian" used often in the Holy Scripture. It appears only three times (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). From these references we learn that one can be persuaded to become a Christian and one must not be ashamed to suffer as a Christian.

What is a Christian? He is a disciple of Christ. What does this mean to us? Once again we will let the Bible speak. As Jesus was preparing His disciples for the coming kingdom of heaven, He gave these definite requirements:

1. *"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord."* (Matt. 10:24-25a)
2. *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:26)
3. *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:27)
4. *"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:31-32)

In conclusion, a Christian is a follower of Christ. He learns and imitates God's Son. He is established and rooted in Jesus Christ. He is a godly person, set apart from the world. He is one who totally submits to the Lord and has a relationship with God. He serves the Savior as a loyal minister. A Christian is a true disciple.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. After the argument between Paul and Barnabas, with whom did Mark go?
2. Of what country are the cedars often referred to in the Old Testament?
3. When Christ offered the cup at the Last Supper, what did He say it was?
4. The Lord promised the land of Canaan to Abram and who else?
5. According to the book of Exodus, what was the punishment for anyone who cursed his father or mother?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was Abraham's wife after Sarah died? KETURAH (Gen. 25:1)
2. The Jew, Alexander, was going to speak in what city, but the crowd kept shouting "Great is Diana"? EPHESUS (Acts 19:34)

3. According to Psalm 104, what does God make his chariot? THE CLOUDS (v.3)

4. God performed swift judgment on Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. How did this affect the early church? GREAT FEAR CAME UPON ALL THE CHURCH (Acts 5:11)

5. What plant was Amos known for growing and caring for? SYCAMORE FIGS (Amos 7:14)

WISDOM FROM SOLOMON

It has always amazed me how Solomon realized the importance of putting the right value on different items. In the book of Proverbs we find a small collection of this wisdom.

1. *"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."* (Prov. 15:17)

2. *"Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right."* (Prov. 16:8)

3. *"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!"* (Prov. 16:16)

4. *"Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."* (Prov. 16:19)

5. *"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife."* (Prov. 17:1)

6. *"Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool."* (Prov. 19:1)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 7 - 12	Freefield Church State Line, MS	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 8 - 12	Rich Hill Church Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 12 - 14	Dowell Hill, IN	Mike Daniel
July 14 - 19	Gablestown Church Boyersville, PA	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 17 - 21	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA (7:00 EST)	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 21 - 26 AL)	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL (7:00 CST)	Harry Cobb (Wedowee,
July 22 - 26	Becton, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 22 - 27	Jigger, LA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 28 - - Aug. 2	Napoleon Church Woodland, AL (7:00 CST)	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 29 - - Aug. 3	Gathering at Torreon, NM	Various speakers

* * * * *

WHAT IF ... the brethren supported your gospel meeting like you supported theirs? (Matt. 7:12)