

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Where Are Christians Found?

Many people believe that Christians can be found in every denomination. There are even members of the body of Christ who think that every denomination has at least a few Christians in them. Is this true? When we stop to consider what a Christian is, it will be seen that the only place where true Christians can be found is in the Lord's church.

What Is A Christian?

The term is found three times in the Bible:

Acts 11:26

"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 26:28

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

1 Peter 4:16

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

Over the years, the term Christian has lost some of its true significance. To many the word Christian simply denotes any European or American who is not Jewish. To others the term is applied to every person who believes that Christ is the Son of God. However, the term actually describes one who is a follower of Christ. It denotes loyalty and total commitment to Him.

What does it mean to be a follower of Christ? It means first to imitate Him and conform to His image (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 2:21). A person who does not possess the characteristics of Christ is not a Christian, no matter where he may be found. Not every member of the body of Christ, that is, the church, is really a Christian. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the church (Acts 5:1-11), but they were not Christians, i.e., they were not followers of Christ. They were liars, something that Jesus never was. Simon, the ex-sorcerer, was a member of the church (Acts 8:13-23), but he was not a Christian. He was greedy for power and fame, things which could not be said of Jesus.

Being a child of God and being a Christian are two different things. One cannot be a Christian without being a child of God, but people can be children of God without being Christians. To maintain the status of being a Christian one must walk in the light (1 John 1:4-7). Some children of God are not in fellowship with God because they have ceased to walk in the light, but there is no such thing as a Christian who is not in fellowship with God. Keep this point in mind.

When does one become a follower of Christ? One becomes a follower of Christ when he

obeys the gospel of Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Paul told the Thessalonians that they became followers of the Lord when they received the word. To obey the gospel involves following the steps as stipulated by the gospel: believing (Mark 16:16), repenting (Acts 3:19), confessing (Romans 10:9-10), and being baptized (Acts 2:38).

A person who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ is not a Christian, even if that person is very religious. Since many denominations, in fact, almost every denomination, teaches error regarding God's plan of salvation, denominations are full of religious folks who are not Christians. If you are a member of a church that doesn't teach the truth about how to become a child of God, you need to leave that church. Most churches today deny that baptism is necessary. However, the Bible teaches that baptism is essential. It is in baptism that one's sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38). A person who has reached the age of accountability and has not been baptized is living in sin.

Baptism does something else too. Baptism puts one into Christ (Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). Another impossible thing is to be a Christian outside of Christ. Since baptism puts one into Christ, baptism is necessary in order for one to be a Christian. Now then, can you find Christians in churches that teach that baptism is not necessary? The obvious answer is no.

Some would agree that one must obey the gospel in order to become a Christian, but they deny that following the doctrine of Christ is necessary in order to maintain one's Christianity. Thus, it is concluded by some that there are denominations that include Christians who simply left the church of Christ and joined a different church. First, it should be pointed out that Jesus only built one church (Matthew 16:18). Paul emphatically declared that there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4). Since the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), there is only one church. To leave the church of Christ is to leave the only institution with which Jesus has anything to do.

It might be argued that the one body of Christ is made up of the various denominations that exist today; thus, one can be a member of a denomination and be in the one body, and therefore be a Christian. But the one body is not made up of denominations, it is made up of individual Christians who are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). Paul said that we are baptized into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13), and obviously individuals are baptized, not denominations. It should be noted that when Paul made the statement that the body is made up of many members, he had to be talking about individuals and not denominations because there were no denominations in existence at the time of the statement.

Secondly, it is impossible to be in a denomination and be a Christian because denominational teachings are contrary to the doctrine of Christ. It may be that there are some of God's children who have gone astray and ended up in a denominational church, but when they left the teachings of Christ they ceased to be Christians. How do I know this? I know it because John said that those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ have not God (2 John 9). Mark it down! There is not a denomination in the world that doesn't teach error on either God's plan of salvation, the work of the church or the organization of the church. If they taught the truth on these important matters, they would not be what they are. This means that every denomination is supporting, knowingly or ignorantly, doctrinal error, and is, therefore, not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. So then, you cannot find Christians in the denominations of the world. There is only one place to find Christians and that is where the Lord put them when they were scripturally baptized, i.e., the church Jesus built.

You can be a non-denominational Christian. Just obey the gospel and follow the doctrine of Christ. This will make you a Christian, and only a Christian, and you will be found in the Lord's church.

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