

## **ASK ANYTHING (1)**

### **Am I Really a Christian?**

#### **A. Introduction**

1. God in His grace has chosen to save a great multitude of people from every nation, tribe, people and language.

Everyone God chooses to be saved will be saved.

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

2. There are many people who think they are saved, who appear to be Christians, who live and talk as Christians, but who on the Day of Judgment will discover that they are not.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

It is vital that we don't wait until then, to find out whether we are Christians or not.

3. Jesus wants those of us who are His followers to be certain that we are.

The letter of 1 John was written with this purpose in mind.

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13)

4. It is possible for us to know whether or not we are Christians.

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves." (2 Corinthians 13:5)

"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10-11)

There must be a way of finding out if we are Christians.

There must be things that those who are Christians do, which make it clear to them and to others that they are genuine followers of Jesus.

5. How can I know if I am really a Christian?

#### **B. What is a Christian?**

1. A Christian is someone who is born again.

"Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

What does it mean to be born again?

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:4-8)

Being born again means that the Christian has received new spiritual life from God (regeneration).

We need to be born again because we are spiritually dead.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

We can only be born again if God makes us spiritually alive by giving us His Spirit.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:35-37)

This is possible because of what Jesus has done for us through His death and resurrection.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:3-4)

2. A Christian is someone who is now different because they are born again.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The effect of being born again is a new faith and a new life.

"The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." (Acts 16:14)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:22-24)

3. A Christian is someone who knows that they have been born again.

Why?

Because the Spirit always bears fruit in the lives of those He makes alive – even if the evidence of fruit is faint.

### **C. How can I know whether I am really a Christian?**

1. Do you believe in Jesus?

Christians believe in Jesus.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36)

Believing in Jesus means affirming true things about Jesus.

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

"This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:2-3)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." (Romans 3:23-25)

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

Believing in Jesus means trusting Him with your life.

"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2:17)

## 2. Are you obeying Jesus?

Christians obeys Jesus.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:24-27)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obeying everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Obeying Jesus does not mean you will never sin because in this life Christians will continue to struggle with sin.

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:15, 19)

Obeying Jesus means that you are not consciously choosing to continually make disobeying Christ your way of life.

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

Obeying Jesus means that when you sin, you feel regret, disappointment and shame, and respond by confessing them to God, seeking His forgiveness, and resolving to obey Him once again.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." (1 John 1:8-10)

## 3. Do you love one another?

Christians love one another.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7-8)

The context for demonstrating this love is the local church.

"Keep on loving each other as brothers." (Hebrews 13:1)

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

Their love extends beyond those in the local church.

"But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." (Luke 6:35)

#### 4. Are you persevering in the faith?

Christians persevere in the faith.

Persevering in the faith means that you must and will keep trusting in Jesus until the end, whether the end is death or Christ's return.

"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

What about those who backslide and abandon the faith?

If their faith is genuine, their backsliding will be temporary.

More likely it is a sign that they never were Christians in the first place, otherwise they would be persevering in following Christ. This does not mean they can't be saved in the future.

"They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." (1 John 2:19)

What matters is not whether we once professed faith in Jesus and behaved like one of His followers, but whether we are following Him today and whether we continue to do so until the end.

"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life." (Jude 21)

We persevere with the confidence that God finishes what He has started.

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy." (Jude 24)

#### **D. Am I really a Christian?**

##### 1. What can give us confidence that we are?

If we are trusting in Jesus today.

"We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (Hebrews 3:14)

"Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no-one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

If we are obeying Jesus today.

"If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)

If we are loving Jesus' body today?

"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him." (1 John 2:9-11)

## 2. What can give us reassurance when we worry that we are not?

Remembering that Jesus is patient with us.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Remembering what Jesus has promised us.

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

## 3. What can help you to live as a Christian if you are?

Being a member of a local church.

## 4. What must you do if you are not?

Turn from your sins.

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)

Trust in Jesus.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13)

And you will find Him ready to save you.