

What is a Christian ?

There are over 2 billion people on this earth who claim to be Christians, in approximately 38,000 different denominations. It is the world's biggest religion.

However, the Bible has a lot to say about that, as indeed did Jesus Christ, and they are both talking much smaller numbers for this era !

First, let's understand that God has a Plan, which will eventually bring even bigger numbers into Christianity. At the moment, one in three persons is a 'Christian' but He aims to eventually give all who have ever lived a chance to join His family, and the Bible states that that is only possible through Jesus Christ. *Acts 4:12, 'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'* The Bible tells us Jesus was the firstborn of an expanding family, *Romans 8:29, 'that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.'* – God the Father is **the** expert on family planning.

Mankind, through his sinful choices, has separated himself from God, but God's spiritual plan will gradually reconcile most of us to Him through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 5:17-19, 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.'*

God's Plan is pictured by the 7 days of Creation and further detailed by the Holy Days listed in Leviticus 23. God re-created the earth in six days and then rested on the seventh, which was made sacred and holy to remind us of the Creator. There is also a new Creation though, as we read, and the Sabbath points forward to that future rest, when the whole earth will be taught the way of God. Hebrews 4 reveals this, and verse 9 speaks of that future Sabbath, that seventh one thousand year period of millennial rest. *'There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.'*

So, the weekly Sabbath is a shadow of that coming time when God will set up His rule and Kingdom here on earth, banishing the rule of Satan the devil, who has held sway over the last 6 thousand years when man was allowed to go his own way. *2 Corinthians 4:4, 'whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.'*

After the coming tribulation, when God punishes mankind (for their sins), there will be few men left, *Isaiah 24:5-6, 'The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.'*

Jesus Christ will return from the Sea of Glass before His Father's throne with His bride, the resurrected saints, to establish His Kingdom here on Earth. *Revelation 20:4,6, 'And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.'* 6: *'Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years...'*

Notice that at that stage, only the Saints had been resurrected in the first resurrection, which took place at the 6th seal, 3 ½ years earlier. The rest of the dead, including all who died during the tribulation are asleep

in the grave and will wait 1000 years for their resurrection, - verse 5: *'But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished....'*

God has always known how many Saints would comprise the Bride of Christ, who, as members of His family would educate and rule those left alive on Earth during the millennium. Over the 1000 years their work will beget* millions to the Family of God, enough at the end of that time to then help educate the people who live again in the 2nd resurrection of all who have ever lived. But notice exactly how many Christians comprise those who take part in the 1st resurrection and the marriage to Christ. And these include all called by God from Adam until today! *Revelation 14:1-3, 'Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.'*

Did you get that? 144,000 out of 2 billion alive today! Actually, many, like Abraham and Moses etc, were called much earlier. And that is the solution. God often only chooses a few in each generation, though He calls many; *Psalms 81:11, 'But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me.'* And *Matthew 22:3, 'and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.'* Sadly, many believe they are Christians today and some even study the scriptures but the problem is that they will not apply them in their lives, *John 5:39-40, 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.'*

Jesus spoke at length about this in Matthew 7. Verses 21-23 reveal that understanding the Bible is not enough. We must apply it – keep and observe the law of God and the teaching of Jesus Christ if we hope to be in the 1st resurrection! *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

He summed up our responsibility in *1 Peter 2:21, 'For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.'*

But how many will do this?

Worldly Christianity has even changed times from the pattern and example of Jesus Christ. They call the 1st day of the week the Sabbath, rejecting the 7th day, which God made holy, and Jesus Christ observed. *Genesis 2:3, 'Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.'* *Luke 4:16, 'He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.'* Keeping the 7th day Sabbath (Saturday) is one of the Ten Commandments!

Many 'Christians' have also rejected the rest of God's commandments, saying that they were nailed to the cross, and done away but *1 John 2:3-4* and other scriptures contradict this, *'Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'*

Most denominations do not keep the Holy Days listed in Leviticus 23, which were kept by Christ and the early Christian Church, as the New Testament scriptures reveal. Each of these days picture a stage in God's Plan – for example Jesus had to die on the day of Passover, for He is the Lamb of God, our Passover, *1 Corinthians 5:7, 'Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.'*

Even of those who do believe they keep these days, most blindly follow the Jews who have introduced postponements to delay these days **for their own traditions**, and calculation without observation of the Moon or the barley [the Abib] despite the fact that they know Jesus condemned that: *Mark 7:7, 13, 'And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'* 13, *'making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.'*

The fact is that very few 'Christians' are prepared to diligently study and apply God's word and the example of our Saviour. No wonder Jesus said: *'Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.'* (Matthew 7:13-14)

Finally then, we have the answer from the Bible that defines just who is a Christian. It is he who keeps God's word and walks in the very footsteps of Jesus Christ. *1 John 2: 5-6, 'But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.'*

God has called you to a glorious future. How will you answer?

*beget I have used the word 'beget', rather than 'born' because we cannot be sure if those who live, are baptised, and receive God's Holy Spirit, during the millennium, are granted eternal life at their death, or must await an opportunity to be tempted by Satan, as we have been. *Revelation 20:3, 'And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little while.'*