

Article of the Month
April, 2023

Why Am I a Christian?

I will speak personally because this is a personal subject. Please pardon this; it is mostly more like a testimony than a monthly article submission. But this topic must not be "preachy!" The subject is just too serious.

The title is the kind of question each of us who makes claims or professions about a relationship with God needs to ask himself -- and in his own words. That does not mean that the following article is not universal in concept. It is. But each of us who claims the name of "Christian" needs to think solely about self when considering the question at the head of this article.

1. By Grace

Anyone on the face of the earth can claim his own religious preferences, affiliations, or desires to have some sort of relationship with God or with gods. But, because THE God is now developing a very special class which He desires to make into His own personal and intimate Divine Family in the spirit realm -- (virtually giving these His own nature -- Divinity, Life-Within-Self, Indestructibility) -- He restricts what we call "spirit begotten" relationships ONLY to those He has decided to "call" according to His purpose at this time who, therefore, gain special kinds of favors from Him in advance of the rest of mankind. (Romans 8:28) In the strictest sense, only these are "Christians."

Others, however, may be thought of as Christians in the sense that they are "Christian-Oriented." This does NOT mean that God discourages others who may wish to approach Him. He makes no such discouragements. But He also distinguishes between those who are generally "Christian" in attitude or belief versus those who are the "called" and have accepted that call -- the fully committed, the consecrated, and the covenanted "sons of God." It is the latter group that gets His full attention and fellowship at this time in history. We can be a part of that blessed group if, BY GRACE, we have been called to do so, and we accept the invitation.

Until the beginning of His promised Kingdom on earth (Matthew 6:10), when He will welcome and bless ALL who wish the blessing (Revelation 22:17), most claims of being a "Christian" remain just that -- claims. The "Body of Christ" (Christians in the most absolute of senses) is restricted to 144,000 beings. (Revelation 14:1; Obadiah 21) That means (in terms of averages) that only about 72 people per year, or 6 per month, over the last 2000 years have been successful in attaining the Lord's standards for His "Church" (= *ekklesia* in Greek, or the "called-out ones" if translated into English.)

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It is NOT, of course, that He is losing all others! That thought is patently absurd when we think of an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving, and all-just God. It is that He has a sequence of accomplishments to finish before His plan has brought everything to a wondrous conclusion. Then ALL who wish will have become His -- and love it!

Even among the "called," a "great multitude" will not be successful in making their "calling and election sure." (II Peter 1:10; Revelation 7:13-17) This being the case, it is Scripturally manifest that many millions in addition to the 144,000 since Jesus' first advent have, indeed, been begotten of the spirit and led of God and are TRUE, if not fully-successful "Christians." The teaching of the Apostle John is that this multitude will not receive "a full reward." (II John 8) But they will not be cast off.

Thus, this first answer to "**Why Am I a Christian?**" is the Biblical truth that I have been blessed BY GRACE to have received the "call." Here it is SO IMPORTANT to say as forcefully as possible that this has nothing to do with any merit or strength on my part. I had nothing to do with it! As Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:26-29, the ones God calls are, if anything, lacking in what mankind thinks of as merit or worthiness. Anyone who is "called" has nothing of which to boast. Indeed, Scripture makes it clear that placing the value in ourselves will, if anything, alienate us from God -- even if we have been among the "called."

Because I understand a lovely portion of God's Plan, I can understand better how and why it might look to many that "God isn't being fair." But: *What KIND of a true God could not be fair?* I would hope that, even if I had no idea of what God is doing, I could have the general attitude of this: "If it is God who is doing it, who am I to question it? If I believe that there IS a good God, I should have the wisdom and faith to accept that whatever He is doing, -- whether or not I know or understand it, and whether or not I am personally a part of it, -- it will be glorious in the end." And, because He IS, indeed, God, I can at the very least have great confidence that it will work out for the best of ALL His creation."

I find that to be rational. But I have also found it rational to be free to ask what He is doing! And the promise is, "ASK, and you will receive; SEEK, and you shall find; KNOCK, and it will open to you." (Matthew 7:7)

But, meantime, here I am -- BY GRACE. THAT is the primary reason that I am a Christian. Without this first point, all else has no explanation. If His grace has decided that NOW is the time He will deal with me, so be it! But His grace is not small nor does it have unfair limitations. All who wish will be recipients of it in His "due time."

2. Because of the Magnificence of the Gospel

Just as there have been relatively few "chosen" to "run in the race" for the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14), there have also been precious few

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who have ever heard the broad scope of the Gospel. "Gospel" is often summarized as "Good News." It is! But HOW GOOD seems to have escaped nearly everyone! Indeed, the doctrinal positions of many denominations seem incredibly lacking in good news. And when they DO seem to have some, it seems RESTRICTED to a chosen few. I would NOT be a Christian if I were tied to the irrational traditions of those institutions which pose as "Christianity" while excluding the vast majority of humanity from God's grace. The Gospel is not creeds. It is the content of the Bible -- without the attachments of the nightmares brought forth by some of its interpreters.

The "Gospel," according to Paul in Ephesians 3:8, was first stated to Abraham in Genesis. That Abrahamic Promise (the "Gospel") was that in Abraham's seed ALL OF THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED. (Genesis 22:17) Do you believe that? Paul then (Galatians 4:28) shows that the true Church IS that promised seed which will bless all the families of the earth. THAT is the Gospel. It is simple; it is all-inclusive. All the families of the earth will, IN DUE TIME, be blessed.

The Gospel is magnificent because it is based on justice, wisdom, love, mercy, fairness and inclusiveness. The terrible experiences of humanity are, unknown to nearly everyone, all designed to work ultimately for their good. Thus the plan of God calls for an awakening from the dead with an attached foolproof opportunity for eternal perfect existence for everyone who will want it. A few will have been called to a higher calling. But their call is explicitly for the purpose of awakening and teaching their fellow human beings in order to bring them to an eternity of peace, joy, lack of want, and a fulfillment of purpose. There are *no strings attached*! But there WILL be requirements. But those requirements will be only so that no one can be injured or corrupted. They will not feel like requirements. They will feel like freedom!

What WILL be missing is death, sickness, poverty, injustice, prejudice, want, tears, pain, superiority of one human over another, old-age maladies, lies. Well, you get the point! Nothing will hurt nor destroy in all of God's coming kingdom. (Isaiah 11:9)

What is NOT a part of the Gospel is threats, eternal torment, denominationalism, misinformation, exclusion of other humans, foolish restrictions, and a long list of human inventions that have nothing to do with God.

Those few who are blessed with becoming the spirit-nature personal family of God, rather than being awakened here on earth, will have received something so extraordinary that its name of "High Calling" falls far short of its rewards.

I am a Christian because the Gospel is beyond anything a human can imagine! It has to be the product of a God so great as to deserve nothing but perfect praise once His plans are understood. I am a Christian because NOTHING approaches its glories once clearly seen.

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3. Because of Inspiring Hopes for Others

Jesus says that the second commandment in importance is that we "love our neighbor as ourselves." I am a Christian because the Christian doctrine promises that eventually that condition of loving others as self will have become the universal in-grained standard. When the welfare of others is the objective of everyone alive, can we even imagine how glorious that will be? But that is the point. The Gospel provides for others. It is not centered on me! The hopes for all of humanity are so inspiring in every aspect of the imagination. Not only will mankind be engrossed in making their neighbors loved, but God will add to it the lack of sickness, fear, dying, debt, ignorance, and every other bad thing that we have experienced. I am a Christian because "the desire of all nations shall come." (Haggai 2:7) Right now we can be narrow -- as in "God bless America!" But soon it will be, "God bless us all." Is that not a wonderful hope? If only one group is blessed, all others yet suffer. The objective of the Gospel message is that blessings will come to ALL.

4. Because of Inspiring Hopes for Self

In my innermost being (my "heart"), I am a Christian because I want to serve a God that deserves my loyalty. But He has promised things for the disciples who are "overcomers." Not to accept those promises would be a terrible sign of ingratitude. Paul says he pressed "forward for the mark of the prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus." No true Christian is a Christian because of a selfish desire for a reward! But the true inner reward is being able to please that magnificent God we adore. Yes, indeed! He HAS promised rewards for His Church. And we would, indeed, be most ungrateful not to want to receive any gift from Him. But "fearing God" is not a terror of Him, it is a down-deep attitude of not wanting to displease Him. We fear that our own imperfections might disappoint Him. We call THAT "fear" a *reverence*.

At this point, it is necessary to consider the very long-term perspective of God's Plan. Somewhere in the remote recesses of the past, God decided he would have his own personal family -- beings LIKE HIM, immortal in nature, divine in organism. They will be, indeed, the very image of their Father's person and likeness of His character. This is a tall order! But God wants it very much. And it, therefore, inspires a hope for self which will make His desires fruitful. And to provide such a "New Creation," He decided to make them FROM imperfect humans whose faith and character can be demonstrated before they are granted that divine nature. The period on earth when evil is permitted is the perfect "proving ground" for the development of this divine family. Jesus was the first to receive that reward. In the past 2000 years, the remaining 144,000 members of that family have been being chosen. The process is just about complete.

So, YES! Who would not be inspired by such a hope? I am a Christian because I want to please my Father by being faithful to His calling and its objectives that I might possibly join in as part of that family -- not for power or prestige, but for the honor of having proved faithful, and, thereby, pleasing Him.

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5. Because I'm in Love!

THAT might seem emotionally overblown! But it IS the testimony of Scripture. When the first period of the Church came into existence, Jesus warned the disciples that they were losing their "first love." (Revelation 2:4) Their first love was the great exuberance that they had FOUND THE MESSIAH. Those early Jewish disciples were enthralled with having discovered him who was to be the savior and establisher of "the kingdom." But the early Church fell into arguments about the Law and other considerations. And their infatuation with their discovery of Messiah waned. We never want to do that! I am a Christian because the more I learn from the Holy Word of the character and plans of my Savior and my God, the more in love I am. I love to delve into the pathways of God's mind -- to see and feel how He thinks. I want to emulate Him as closely as I can because I find no being more worthy of emulation. I am possessed by His attributes and His personal dealings with me. I am in love!

6. How about YOU?

The "door" to the "High Calling" is not yet closed. It may be open only for a short while yet. Do YOU feel "called?" If so, say "YES" to Him who calls. Seek Him out in His holy Word -- the ONLY source for understanding Him. Seek out those who are likewise committed to "the Narrow Way" -- but a way filled with incalculable and inexpressible joys and fulfillment. The called are admonished to not forsake the assembling of themselves with others of like precious faith. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Once this blessed "Body of Christ" is complete, the blessings will flow to this poor and weary world. Indeed! "The desire of all nations shall come." And the whole earth will be at peace and be quiet. Then they will break forth into singing. (Isaiah 14:7)

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