

## **"But WHY are you a Christian?"**

It's a good question! - and before you read on you might look to look away and try to answer it for yourself: "I am a Christian because ...".

We hear a variety of answers these days, some of which have a valid place, and some of which don't! Here are some samples, which perhaps you have come across in others, or in yourself: "It's how I was brought up" / "I feel calm in a church" / "I've got a good bunch of friends at my church" / "My wife's a Christian so I go along too" / "My parents sent us off to Sunday School" / "I just am - I've never really thought about it" / "I love the singing" / "I said a prayer for Granny when I was a kid, and Granny got better". What do you reckon?

Why did those first disciples down tools and follow Jesus when He spoke those momentous words - "Come, follow Me"? Each of them made a life-changing decision, in some cases apparently on the spur of the moment. The lives of the men themselves, plus those of their wives and families, were completely altered, and for ten of the original twelve, those lives ended in martyrdom for the sake of the Lord they had followed.

What are the ingredients of the various evangelistic sermons in the Acts, and of the arguments in the Epistles, as to why we should respond to the Holy Spirit's call and become followers of Christ? Time and again we see the same emphases coming through, albeit slightly varied depending on the audience and circumstances of each occasion.

We see Jesus of Nazareth being proclaimed as the Lord, as the Christ, as the Messiah (eg Acts 2.22-36). Those claims are always based on the FACTS! When the listeners are Jews, they are reminded that they knew of this Man, either from Scripture or from personal experience or from both; that they played their part in having Him crucified; that God the Father had raised Him from the dead and had now exalted Him in heaven.

When the listeners are Gentiles, the proclamation starts with "where they are at". In Acts 10 for example, Peter, in the house of Cornelius, leads with the recognition, shockingly new for him, that God "is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10.34-35 AV; see also for example Romans 10.8-13). In Acts 17 Paul in Athens leads with identifying their "Unknown God", explaining that God made the world and all things in it. Once the scene has been set, be it by Peter or Paul

or whoever, then Jesus is proclaimed as Lord and Christ, crucified, risen, ascended and glorified. The proclamation ends with a call to action - "So now", comes the question, "in the light of these facts, what are you going to do about it?".

In Acts 2.37-47 there was a "woooooomf" of response! - three thousand people "gladly received his (Peter's) word" and were baptized. So how would any of those joyful new Christ-accepting believers have answered the question - "Why are you a Christian?". Simple! "Because the FACTS show clearly that He is TRUE".

Just so for us these days. We are standing in a bear-pit of shouting, jostling, competing beliefs, just as the Lord, Peter, Paul and the others have done before us. We are entrusted with the most precious message of all - the gift of peace with God by our simple acceptance that Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord. And the Holy Spirit's call to us to accept Christ is utterly well-founded on the FACTS! - the very nature of the Bible itself; the well-attested events and promises on which the whole Bible is based, (notably the creation, the Fall and the Messianic promise; the Flood, Babel, the covenant with Abram and the giving of the law; all culminating in the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension); and last but not least, our own experiences along life's road - that our following Christ simply "rings true".

So we join with Peter in his words - "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6.68-69 AV). There's our answer - THAT'S why we are Christians!

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