

Christ's Own — Not of the World, Outside the Camp

*Acts 11:26 · John 8:23 · John 17:16–18 · Romans 12:2 · Hebrews 13 · Exodus 33 ·
Revelation 3 · Revelation 1*

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Acts 11:26

What It Means to Bear Christ's Name

The word 'Christian' is very common in the world today — a religious category, a way of saying one acknowledges the God of the Bible. But the name 'Christian' means that the name of the Lord Jesus is upon us. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch because there was something about those early believers that caused people to say: you are Christ's people. What responsibility does that place upon me?

To bear Christ's name properly is to truly be one of His. Not everyone who says 'I am a Christian' really is. The difference is this: if I have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, confessed that I am a sinner, asked Him to save me, and received the free gift of salvation — then I am one of His. I am a Christ-ian. I am not simply someone who, when asked about religion, says, 'I am none of those others, so call me a Christian.' I bear His name because I belong to Him.

And if that is the case, what responsibility do I have? Think of it in simple human terms. A father has children who bear his name. Their responsibility is to acknowledge him as their father and to regard the things he tells them. Is it

any different with the Lord? If we are called by His name, do we not have a responsibility to regard Him, to regard His word, and to do the things He has told us to do? Two areas of responsibility suggest themselves: first, what should my behavior be with respect to the world around me? And second, what is my relationship to the profession of Christianity, knowing that not all who bear the name are truly His?

John 8:23

I Am Not of This World

The Lord Jesus speaks plainly in John 8:23: 'Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.' He offers only two choices — from beneath or from above, of this world or not of it. He was physically in the world when He said that, and yet He said it. He walked through this world, worked as a carpenter's son, made His way in it — and yet He was not of it. He kept Himself separate from the spirit and course of the world. When asked about taxes, He paid His taxes. He was in the world, but not of it.

What should a Christian be? If I am one of His, then I should be like Him. Being 'not of the world' does not mean retreating to a cave, or physically separating yourself from all society — the Lord Jesus did not do that. But He was not conformed to the world's spirit, its ambitions, its values, or its ways.

John 17:16–18

Sent Into the World but Not of It

In John 17:16–18 the Lord prays for His own: 'They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.' The

parallelism is exact. Christ was not of the world — and Christians are not of the world. Christ was sent into the world — and Christians have been sent into it.

This means I have been sent. I am not simply floating through life, calling myself a Christian with no purpose. The Lord said of His own that they are sent. Was Abraham sent to get into politics and become a judge in the city? No — that was Lot. Abraham was a wanderer all his life, never owning land except a burial place. That is a true pilgrim, and that is something of what we have been sent to be — pilgrims and strangers in this world. The Lord Jesus never owned a house, and never even owned a grave as Abraham did.

Romans 12:2

Not Conformed but Transformed

Romans 12:2 presents two options: 'Be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.' To be conformed to the world is to be indistinguishable from it — living exactly as my neighbor lives, wanting what he wants, going where he goes. That was Lot. He conformed himself to Sodom for years. The only time they realized he was not one of them was when he said one faithful word.

The alternative is transformation by the renewing of the mind. This is not simply stopping bad thoughts or filling the mind with better things. A transformed mind is a mind saturated with God's thoughts — not mine. It is a completely different mind, formed only by the word of God. The goal is to prove, that is, to demonstrate, the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. You cannot demonstrate what you do not first know, and you can only know it through His word.

When they came to arrest the Lord and brought Him to a mock trial, Peter was standing nearby and someone said, 'I recognize you — you are one of His.' Peter stood out. He was recognizable as belonging to the Lord. That is how a believer should be in this world: not conformed, not like everyone else — something different.

Hebrews 13 • Exodus 33:5–7

Outside the Camp

The expression 'outside the camp' in Hebrews 13 comes from Exodus 33. After the golden calf incident, Jehovah said to Moses that He could not dwell among a stiff-necked people. Moses took the tent of meeting and pitched it outside the camp, far from it, calling it the tent of meeting. From that time forward, everyone who sought the Lord had to go outside the camp to meet Him. Just the week before, you could find the Lord in the midst of the camp. Now you had to meet Him outside it.

What is the camp in our day? In the Old Testament it was Israel — the camp of the covenant people. I would suggest that the camp in our day is the profession of Christianity that is not subject to Christ. Many believers, and many who merely claim to be believers, are not doing what the Lord has said. That is organized religion — Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, every Protestant denomination. They are the camp. They claim to be Christian, but they are not submitting to what the word of God teaches.

Where is the Lord? The Lord is not drawing every believer to a particular building on a Sunday morning. The Lord is in glory, and the Holy Spirit draws hearts upward to where He is — by faith rising to the heavenly place. In Israel you had to leave the camp to find the Lord. In our day, you have to leave organized religion, because He is not drawing you to a denomination.

He is drawing you to where He is, gathered unto His name alone.

Does this mean that any group meeting outside a church building is automatically 'outside the camp'? No — it depends on whether, as Christians, they are following in obedience the word of God. Some groups believe there are many bodies, despite Ephesians teaching that there is one body. They meet on the ground of 'a body of Christ,' not the one body. That is still the camp. We seek to meet on the ground that there is one body, though all members are not present — not because we are perfect, but because we have subject hearts desiring to carry out what the word of God teaches as to the ground of gathering.

Revelation 3:14–22

The State of Laodicea

Revelation 3:14–22 is the last of the seven letters, and it describes the current state of the profession of Christianity. The Lord says of Laodicea: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot... because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'

This lukewarmness comes from Christians saying: you worship God your way, I will worship God my way — no harm, no foul. There is no zeal for the Lord, no desire to return to basic principles in Scripture and follow what is laid out there. Instead, churches have engineered everything — how to get young people saved, how to reach them — as though the Holy Spirit is not able to guide in those things. They are displacing the Holy Spirit in His work. It is no wonder, if Laodicea describes the camp today, that the message to us is to go outside the camp to meet the Lord.

And yet He says: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' The Lord is knocking at the door of His own professed church. The gathering described in Matthew 18:20 — where two or three are gathered together unto His name, there He is in the midst — that is where the Lord is. If you want the camp, there are ever so many choices. If you want the Lord, it is where He has put His name.

Revelation 1:4–18

John on Patmos: Fear Not

Revelation opens beautifully: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.' Right at the beginning of a book of judgment, His love is brought in. And wherever the Lord is spoken of in Revelation, it is as Jesus Christ — not Lord Jesus Christ, not Christ Jesus, but Jesus Christ. Jesus is the name He took in lowliness on this earth. He is the same one who walked here.

John was in the isle of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. History tells us they had tried to boil him in oil, and when that did not work they banished him. But John does not mention this. He says simply: 'I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.' He was not bitter, not chafing under his exile. He was there for the word of God, and we are reading the fruit of it two thousand years later. And he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day — that is where he was, regardless of circumstances.

John turned and saw the risen, glorified Lord Jesus, and fell at His feet as dead. He had been at the very beginning of the church, looking for the Lord to come. And now he was seeing that the Lord was going to judge His own

church. No wonder he fell as dead. But the Lord laid His right hand upon him and said: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.' As though He said: 'John, I am the same one on whose bosom you lay. I am not different. I went through death — more than you have — and I am alive.' He is a living Savior, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We may have real battles in our families and in this world. We have not yet resisted unto blood, as others in the world today have. But we have the same Lord. His truth has not been ruined — it cannot be. He will have a remnant who will seek grace to walk in that truth as it is in Jesus. We do not say we are the church — we say we are part of the body of Christ, seeking in weakness and failure to walk in the good of what He has given us in His word. And He is there, putting His hand on our shoulder and saying: 'Fear not, little flock.'