

# What is a Christian?

In Antioch in the first century the term 'Christian' was first applied as a term of derision by the persecutors of those who followed Jesus the Nazarene. 2000 years later many millions of people across the globe still claim to be Christians. Many people define themselves as Christians simply because of their attendance at a Christian church or simply their belief in the Christian God, but how does such a definition stand up to the Bible's definition?

**When Jesus walked the earth, many men and women followed him.**

**When Jesus entered Jerusalem, these men and women fell at his feet and worshipped him.**

**These people claimed to believe in Jesus Christ, but only a few weeks later these same people were shouting "Crucify him!"**

Clearly, stating belief in Christ is not enough. If saying you are a follower of Jesus, or saying you believe in God is not enough, then what is a Christian? Let's start at the beginning...

## WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus Christ was born in Palestine two thousand years ago. The fact of his existence is well supported, not just by the biblical documents but by contemporary independent historians such as Tacitus and Josephus. His strident teachings against the hypocrisy of the religious establishment of the day led to a conspiracy against him. This conspiracy led to an illegal trial and a hasty crucifixion. This would have been the end if Jesus had been a fraud. Three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a fact that has never been refuted. As many as 500 people saw Christ after his resurrection. Jesus' startling claims about himself leave the human race with some difficult decisions to make. Many categorise Jesus Christ as a good moral teacher. This would be fine, except that Jesus never claimed this for Himself. He predicted his own death and resurrection and claimed that he was the Son of God. You therefore (as C. S. Lewis pointed out) have to decide whether Jesus was mad, bad or he was the Son of God. Madness or badness would be difficult to claim in the light of the many miracles and acts of incredible mercy demonstrated in the Bible.

Some would dismiss the claims of the Bible concerning Jesus as an improbable fiction. However, no author (even Shakespeare) has ever managed to construct a perfect fictional character - flaws always emerge.

But in Jesus we see a man whose life was characterised by a perfection that can be seen as none other than divine.

## WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Jesus himself gives the reason: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11: 25-26). When we break the laws of the land, we cannot complain when we are punished. So it is when we break God's laws. When we are angry in our hearts, when we lust for another person, when we desire possessions, we break God's laws. God's punishment for those who reject Him and His law so conclusively is an eternity away from him - this is hell. Jesus Christ in dying upon the Cross took that punishment upon himself. Therefore, whoever believes in him will live.

## CONCLUSION

A Christian does not simply believe in going to Church or in trying to be good. A Christian has believed and trusted in Jesus Christ with all of their life. A Christian lives for Jesus Christ and not for themselves - and this is life indeed.