

## Acts of Jesus – part 22

What's in a name? Our series in the book of Acts and considering the first place where followers of Jesus were called Christians.

### 1. Acts 11:19-26

--Christian: One of the most misused and misunderstood names in History

--For several centuries now, this name has meant little more than a European or an American who is neither Jewish nor Muslim.

--For instance, Hitler and the master mind of the Jewish exterminations of WWII, Heinrich Himmler, were not Muslim extremist and they certainly weren't Jewish -- they were Christian!

--I think it would serve us well to spend our time together defining what a Christian really is.

First, the occasion in which this name first shows up: The believers in this instance do not take this name, but are, instead, given this name by the pagan world around them.

--This means literally "those of the party of Christ" or even more literally "little Christs" -- meant to be derogatory but was no doubt an honor for the followers of Christ in Antioch.

--They did not take the name themselves, but the outside world labeled them as belonging to Christ.

--Would the outside world recognize us as such?

A group of business men were running through an airport to a catch plane that was soon to leave and bumped up against the stand of a fruit vender spilling apples all over the airport terminal. All kept on running...no time to help...all but one—a Christian. He took a few steps but realized there was no way his conscience would leave him alone. Telling his associates to go on without him and that he would catch a later flight, he turned around to help the girl whose table they had overturned. Boy was he glad he did. The 16 yr. old girl who was working the fruit stand was blind! She was helplessly groping for the scattered apples and he knelt down to and helped her retrieve them all. As he did he noticed that many of them were bruised or damaged and could not be cleaned and sold. When he had finished, he pulled out a couple of 20's from his wallet and handed them to the girl. She thanked him through tears. He said, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly." Then he said goodbye and turned to walk away. The girl called out from behind him "Hey, Mister". He turned to see her smiling at him, and then she said, "Are you Jesus?"

--It was because of no doubt similar actions and attitudes that were so strikingly in contrast to the pagan world around them that the believers in Antioch were given the name "Christian".

### 2. Fairly easy to define a word but what about a person? What constitutes a Christian person?

There are a number of ways we could come at this:

1. If you think of the term Christian from the perspective of a label (which is what it originally was), then let's understand what a Christian is from that angle.

--What does a label on a package tell us? Ownership, contents, point of origin, point of destination.

Ownership: 1 Cor. 6:19-20

Contents: Rom. 8:9, Gal. 4:6

Point of Origin: Eph. 5:8, Eph. 2:1, Jn. 5:24.

Point of Destination: Jn. 14:2-3

--These things are not necessarily true for all who are called or who call themselves "Christian".

2. To be a true Christian you have to be born one:

--Only way to get into a human family by blood is to be born into it.

--Only way to get into the Christian family is by blood (Jesus') and by birth. Jn. 3:2

--This birth involves 2 parents = Spirit of God **Jn. 3:5-6** Word of God **I Pet. 1:23**  
--You don't decide who your parents are and you don't decide your birthday in a normal birth

--On the other hand, the new birth is not a normal birth in that:

1. You decide your own birthday.
2. You choose your own Father.
3. You choose your own family: **Jn. 1:12**

--It is incorrect (it makes no sense) to say, "I'm a born-again Christian"; that is redundant; because that's the only kind of Christians there are.

--For a person to say they're a Christian when they haven't been born again is a misuse of that term.

--You must be born again to be Christian

--You can be born once and be an American

--**You must be born twice to be a Christian.**

3. This new birth results in a new nature:

--When you are born to parents with sinful natures, you too have a sinful nature.

--When you are born to holy parents (Spirit and Word of God), you receive their nature

--Those who are born again are: **II Pet. 1:4**

--This new nature is what's to blame for this group of followers in Antioch being labeled "little Christ's"

There was a wealthy Oriental man who took his young daughter to a missionary school, willing to pay whatever it cost. The only catch was that he didn't want his daughter enrolled in the school but merely to stay long enough so that in his words, **"they could put something on her face to make her as beautiful as the other girls at the school."** The missionaries explained that nothing was put on the faces of the girls who attended the school. The gentleman said, **"Then why are the girls that come out of this school prettier than the girls in town? When girls come here they are just plain looking, but before long they become pretty. What do you put on their faces?" he demanded.** It dawned on the missionary what the man was actually observing and he replied, **"It's not something we put on their faces, but Someone they receive into their hearts."**

**You are the best Christian someone knows...make a difference with them.**