**Disciples Were Called “Christians”**

*Acts 11:26*

**Introduction**

1. Acts 10 was a pivotal point in the growth of the church as the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, and they were added to the saved.
2. **Acts 11:1-18** – Peter defends his involvement with the Gentiles as being a part of God’s plan. His description of the conversion of Cornelius’ household, along with the validation of such by the witnesses **(v. 12),** caused the Jews to glorify God **(v. 18**).
3. While the adjustment to the new inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of God would prove difficult for many of the Jews – some altogether rejecting God’s plan – **Acts 11:19-26** shows the change in the disciples as the Gentiles were now subjects of evangelistic efforts, and the church’s borders were broadened.
4. **Acts 11:26** – it was at this juncture in the history of the Lord’s body where the name we wear was given.
5. The Designation
6. By God
   1. Some suggest this was a derogatory name given by enemies of the cross.
      1. Use Peter’s words to suggest such – **1 Peter 4:15-16** – suggestion that Christian was considered in the same way as those of **v. 15**.
      2. Peter was speaking about suffering for doing good – Christian was a name to take pride in, not be ashamed of.
      3. Term of derision was coined – **Acts 24:5** – accusation against Paul by Tertullus.
         1. Nazarene – one from Nazareth. (Jesus was a Nazarene, and His followers called such.)
         2. **Cf. John 1:46** – nothing good comes from there.
      4. Referred to by Agrippa – **Acts 26:28-29** – Paul not offended.
   2. **Acts 11:26** – called – *chrēmatizō* – to utter an oracle, i.e. divinely intimate. (Strong)
      1. Every time used in NT refers to an utterance of God.
      2. God is the one who called them Christians.
      3. Possibly through Paul and Barnabas – **Acts 11:25-26** – there teaching them for a whole year.
   3. Possibly a fulfillment of prophecy – **Isaiah 62:2** – a new name given.
      1. **Isaiah 62:1-2** – considering Zion and salvation, especially that of the Gentiles being included.
      2. **Acts 11:19-21** – conversion of Gentiles – Hellenists.
   4. No doubt a name divinely given.
7. To Disciples
   1. **Acts 11:26** – disciples were designated Christians.
   2. Disciple – one who learns from the teachings of another, identifies with them, and imitates their way of life.
   3. Suffix – ian – one from, belonging to, relating to, or like. (Christ)
   4. Truly, Christian is an appropriate name given Christ’s disciples, and only those who are truly His disciples can rightly be called such – **cf. John 8:31; 1 John 2:6**
8. The Accompaniment
9. Inclusion of the Gentiles
   1. Jews exclusively preached to until this time – **Acts 11:19-21** – at the preaching of Jesus they were converted.
   2. Barnabas saw the effects of God’s grace – **Acts 11:23**
      1. At Jerusalem council – **Acts 15:11** – saved in the same manner through God’s grace.
      2. **Titus 2:11** – it has appeared to all men.
      3. Christian – a name which emphasizes this even more and was given first to those Christians who were Gentiles. (**cf. Acts 15:17** – James speaking, even Gentiles called by God’s name.)
   3. The creation of a new man:
      1. Peace between God and man accomplished the same way for Jew and Gentile – **Ephesians 2:14-18** – a new man – Christian (**cf. Galatians 3:28** – all one in Christ)
      2. Significance of “Christian:”
         1. Christ – Greek term for Jewish “messiah”
         2. View the Jews had – **Ephesians 2:11-13** – without Christ, i.e. the messiah does not concern the Gentiles.
         3. Paul is making the point that the Christ was every bit as much for the Gentiles as the Jews – **Ephesians 3:6** – mystery revealed.
10. Choice of Obedience
    1. While God chose the Gentiles to be included in these blessings each individual still had to choose whether to partake. This was done through obedience.
    2. The goodness and severity of God is universal in its application – **Romans 11:19-24** – ultimate condition of belief vs unbelief.
    3. **Acts 11:21** – they believed and turned, or believed and were baptized – **Acts 2:38; 3:19**
    4. Only those who meet the Gospel’s conditions are truly called “Christians.”
11. The Blessing
12. Identification with Christ
    1. A Christian is one who is from Christ, belonging to Christ, relating to Christ, or like Christ.
    2. The importance of being identified with Christ – **Matthew 10:32-33** – He will identify us in the judgment.
       1. The most wonderful words – **Matthew 25:34**
       2. The most terrifying words – **Matthew 25:41**
       3. In the end, we want to be identified with Christ. Those who wear the name Christian, both nominally and practically, will be identified with Him in the end.
13. Privileges in Christ
    1. A Christian is IN Christ – **Ephesians 1:3** – where all the spiritual blessings exist.
       1. Holiness, blamelessness, adoption, forgiveness, knowledge of the mystery, an inheritance, the seal and guarantee of our salvation by the Holy Spirit.
       2. Exclusivity – these are only found in Christ – EVERY.
    2. As those in Christ we also have:
       1. Proven path – **1 Peter 2:21-22** – can’t go wrong following Jesus.
       2. Constant source of joy – **Philippians 4:4** – blessings which transcend all outer forces.
       3. Everlasting consolation – **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17** – an eternal measure of comfort for any situation.
       4. A victorious leader – **Hebrews 2:10, 14-15** – (archegos – to begin and to lead) a captain who rushed the enemy Himself to guarantee our victory – **1 Corinthians 15:56-57**
14. The Projection of Glory
15. What Adopting Other Names Accomplishes
    1. The denominational concept is that all are “Christians” even though identified with various groups.
       1. EX: Denominations of money – 1, 5, 10, 20, 100 – different, but all money.
       2. Different denominations, but all “Christian” denominations.
       3. This is unscriptural.
    2. The inspired apostle Paul would not stand for this – **1 Corinthians 1:10-13**
       1. **(v. 12)** – same as saying, “I am of the Baptists,” “I am of the Methodists,” “I am of the Presbyterians,” “I am of the Catholics,” etc.
       2. **(v. 13)** – Is Christ divided?
          1. There are no distinctions of Christians. There are just Christians.
          2. NOTE: When we identify ourselves with a person, group, or institution instead of just Christ, we attribute to that one all of Christ’s accomplishments, thus, glorifying someone other than Him.
    3. We must simply wear the name given by God if we wish to glorify Him.
16. Christian – A Name Which Glorifies Christ
    1. “Christian,” like all names, distinguishes. It is distinctive in nature.
    2. Christ said – **John 14:6** – He is the exclusive way to salvation.
    3. No other name is given among men for salvation – **Acts 4:12**
    4. HIS NAME ALONE IS EXALTED BY GOD – **Philippians 2:9-11**
    5. This by God’s design – **Colossians 1:18-20; 2:2-3, 9-10** – He has preeminence.
       1. For this reason all should be done in His name – **Colossians 3:17**
       2. Wearing any other name and submitting to any doctrine that is contrary to His name is to fail in glorifying Him.

**Conclusion**

1. We must wear the name “Christian” proudly.
2. We are extremely blessed to bear Christ’s name.
3. The name was Divinely designated, and blesses us with riches, and glorifies God.