

Would Christ Recognise Our Christianity?

Adrian was a school teacher who was busy marking his pupils' examination papers. "Oh no!" he cried out loud, "I was so careful to emphasise the correct way to do this but hardly anyone has got it right. You would think that I hadn't even mentioned it in the lessons. If I hadn't taught it then I might be able to understand why they get it so wrong. The problem is that they believe what they want rather than what I tell them."

Such is the common frustration of a teacher – pupils do not always heed the expert's teaching, however clear it may be. Unfortunately, the same problem plagues religious belief. We all like to believe things that we find pleasant or even natural, and it can be extremely difficult to change such long-standing beliefs.

Some of Jesus' Teaching

Jesus repeatedly quoted the Old Testament scriptures and obviously believed them, regarding them as his guide for all aspects of life. He stated his belief in one God – the God of Israel as revealed in the Old Testament:

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (Mark 12:29).

And he affirmed that God is greater than Jesus himself:

I am going to the Father, for my Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

Jesus taught that baptism is essential for people who want to be saved:

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

Sadly, he also warned that when he comes back there may not be much true faith on the earth (Luke 18:8), and that unbelievers and apparent believers who have not followed his teachings will be refused a place in God's kingdom on earth (Matthew 8:10–12; Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 13:24–30).

Jesus often spoke about the Kingdom of God; indeed, it was central to his message:

I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent (Luke 4:43).

It is then mentioned more than 25 more times in Luke's gospel record alone.

Jesus taught his believers how to view God, life and material possessions, and how to treat other people – both in his words (Luke 6:20–38) and by his example. Jesus emphasised the importance of Israel in the purpose of God (e.g. Matthew 5:35; 15:24; 19:28, John 4:22 and many of the parables), while also teaching that both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) could be saved only through him:

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

The Disciples Believed Jesus

Some of these ideas were initially foreign to many of the Jews who did not properly understand their Old Testament scriptures. In fact, they preferred their own ideas and interpretations, refusing to believe that Jesus was who he said he was, and certainly rejecting what he said. However, the somewhat amazing claims made by Jesus were vindicated when – contrary to expectations – he was raised from the dead to eternal life and then taken up into heaven.

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear openly (Acts 10:39–40).

His disciples were so utterly convinced by these events that they risked and often gave their own lives for these beliefs and the teachings of Jesus. They caused a revolution in religious thinking, first in Israel and then throughout the world.



They firmly believed that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah (the Christ) promised by the Old Testament prophets – which was indeed what Jesus himself had preached (see Matthew 16:15–17).

Jesus is the focal point of Christianity. His resurrection is evidence

that he is the Son of God (Romans 1:4), a pattern for Christian life (6:4–9), a guarantee of the believer’s resurrection (8:11) and a fundamentally important doctrine (10:9). The apostles preached this fervently, while adhering to the other messages preached by Jesus.

What About Us?

Do we believe these things? Are they what our church leaders teach? Do we pick and choose which parts of the Bible we read? Do we study both the Old Testament and the New Testament? Are God’s promises and His standards the things we talk about? Do we take our beliefs exclusively from the Bible? Are we familiar with what Jesus actually taught and are we trying to do as he said?

Or do we think that nowadays we know better than Jesus? This would be a very bold and dangerous claim, yet many today assert they have superior knowledge to that of the Son of God, stating that when he preached, the world was less sophisticated.

Jesus warned about ‘*blind leaders of the blind*’ (Matthew 15:12–14). We can be led astray by very appealing music, paintings, traditions and false beliefs. We are told in Acts about the Bereans, who “*searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*” (Acts 17:11). They carefully checked the teachings of the Apostles against the Bible, and were commended for it. This is critically important for us too.

Adrian the teacher did not recognise his teaching in his pupils’ answers. We should all ask whether Jesus would recognise his teachings in our modern, personal Christianity.

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