

Chapter 2

THE MEN CALLED CHRISTIANS

*Who feed “the men called Christians” with the word of God?
How are they being “fed?”
What is their primary activity?*

Christianity refers to a major religion whose belief in God is based on the *Holy Bible*. Therefore, members of all religious sects that use the Bible as the basis of their teachings are generally called *Christians*. The designation is derived from the name of the central figure of the book – *Jesus Christ*. However, within the realm of this religion today, adherents no longer call themselves Christians, for the title has become a generic term. This is because *Christianity Today* is divided into so many denominations that to use the title will only invite ambiguity. The latest count runs to several thousands. Therefore, to call the members of the different segments of Christianity as Christians will create confusion.

It is, therefore, common today to hear people believing in Jesus Christ identifying themselves by the religious sects to which they belong. Thus, members say, “I am a Lutheran, I am a Presbyterian, ...a Roman Catholic, ...a Baptist, ...an Eastern Orthodox, ...a Pentecostal, ...a Methodist, ...a Pentecostal Oneness, ...a Charismatic, ...a Catholic Charismatic, ...a Protestant Charismatic, ...a Born Again Christian, ...a Seventh Day Adventist, ...a Jehovah’s Witness, ...a Church of God, ...a Church of Christ, ...an Assembly of God, plus many more, running to thousands.

How does this compare with AD 30-96 Christianity? This is one area of difference that the observant will easily discern. What is surprising, however, is that very few of those who belong to the Christian religion ever realize this. The great majority, if not all, think that it is their respective denomination that represents the Christian religion, with the rest surreptitiously appropriating the title.

THE CHRISTIANS IN AD 30-96 AND THEIR RECOGNITION OF GOD

The title "Christian" to describe the followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ was first heard in Antioch.¹ Later, the title was applied to the believers in different places; thus, "the Christians of Rome," "the Christians of Corinth.," "...of Galatia," "...of Ephesus," "...of Philippi," "...of Thessalonica," "...of Colosse."

Generally speaking, the 1st century Christians were in the minority. They were obscure, and ostracized. They were perceived to be antisocial and were thus hated. As such, they never merited a place in history any more its founder, Jesus Christ.

One thing that characterized the early Christians, though, was their unity in all aspects of the teachings of Christ, and everything written in the Bible. They had a common recognition of the "The Lord our God is one Lord," for nowhere in the Acts of the Apostles do we find them ever arguing or differing in beliefs on the relationship among the invisible God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This was enunciated in the "first commandment" or the "most important commandment" stated by our Lord when He was asked by a Scribe as to which is the first or the most important commandment of all:

Mark 12:29 [KJV] "And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:"

Mark 12:29 [NIV] "The most important one," answered Jesus, 'is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

We can no longer find unity in belief in "The Lord our God is one Lord" in *Christianity Today*. "God is one Lord" is the subject of heated discussions among many religious sects today. In fact, this is a major cause of the division of this religion. The importance of the truth stated by Jesus Christ in Mark 12:29 cannot be overemphasized. The recognition of the "*The Lord our God is one Lord*" is a prerequisite to the *Two Great Commandments* stated in Mark 12:30-31.² It is in this regard that the exhortation of Paul to the Christians of Ephesus finds its mark:

¹ Acts 11:26 "...And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

² Mark 12:30-31 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. ³¹ And the second *is* like,

Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Each sect of *Christianity Today* claims this kind of "unity." But how spiritually profound is it entrenched in the light of the real application of the word of God and its perfect message? To cite just one example, how do modern Christians look at:

Hebrews 8:11 "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

How easy for everybody to say, "I know the Lord Jesus." But how deep and clear is that recognition? Do not many people find some mystery in the relationship among Father God, Jesus Christ, and the invisible Holy Spirit? Can they not perceive them to be interacting with each other as: The Son is talking to the Father and the Father talking to the Son; and see them distinct and separate from each other as in the baptism of Jesus Christ: the Son was in the water, the Father was speaking about the Son, and the Holy Spirit was seen in the form of a dove? The Bible says such thing was not present in the early Christians:³

Colossians 2:2 "That their hearts might be comforted...and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; ³In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The mystery about the identity of the great Creator was revealed to the early Christians.⁴

namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

³ Colossians 1:26 "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:"

⁴ Ephesians 3:9 "And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

ACTIVITIES OF TODAY'S CHRISTIANS

The activities of modern Christianity, represented by the religious sects that compose it, are varied. These may be classified into: religious, social, civic, and political.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Of course, the main activity of all religious sects centers on the religious. This refers to the regular religious services on certain days like Sunday, Saturday, and other days of the week. The services are varied in each denomination. They may take the form of ceremonies like Masses, processions, or such activities as Bible studies, preaching, singing of hymns, giving of testimonies, among others.

Included also in the religious activities are the different evangelical works or ministries: radio, television, religious rallies, distribution of printed materials, either free or for sale, to promote every denomination's doctrines. Other religious activity is fund-raising for the construction of chapels, churches, and cathedrals. Establishment of seminaries and Bible schools for the training of pastors, priests, or ministers is another.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Modern Christianity, through the religious sects composing it, brings to attention the different social activities. Included here are the baptismal, wedding, and house-warming or blessing ceremonies, followed by reception and revelry.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Modern Christianity does not only engage in religious and social, but also in civic activities. Almost all religious denominations have their respective civic programs. We find them conducting their own charitable works on many occasions such as during Christmas season, in time of calamities like earthquakes, floods, typhoons, tsunamis and the like. The larger religious sects have elaborate projects such as the establishment of orphanages, home for the aged, hospitals, and schools, and caring for the unwed mothers.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Modern Christianity, through some religious sects, also finds itself actively engaged in politics. Religious leaders and the laity take an indirect and, in some cases, direct hand in the political affairs of certain countries. Political

leaders of some countries are influenced, in varying degrees, by the political activity of some Christian sects. Elections and major political decisions cannot shed their religious color in a number of underdeveloped countries.

The foregoing, in a nutshell, are the different and major activities of *Christianity Today*.

ACTIVITIES OF AD 30-96 CHRISTIANITY

In contrast with modern Christianity, early Christians had very limited activity. This was confined to purely spiritual work. The Jews anticipated that the work of the Messiah would involve the kinds of activity we find in today's Christianity. Right from the birth of Jesus Christ, Herod thought that the child born in Bethlehem would be a threat to his throne. That is why he plotted His murder. The misconception of Herod resulted in the death of many male children below two years old.⁵

When our Lord began His ministry, some of the Jews who saw His miracles were convinced that He was the king spoken of by the prophets. In the belief that Jesus would deliver their country Israel from the political control of Rome, they virtually force him to take a political role:

John 6:14 "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. ¹⁵When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

Even Pilate, the Roman governor, thought that Jesus was the king of the Jews. Watch how Pilate talked to our Lord:

John 18:35 "Pilate answered...Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? ³⁶Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world..."

⁵ Matthew 2:16 "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."

Jesus Christ disassociated Himself from the political leaders in His time. It was prophesied by Isaiah that He would free the prisoners.⁶ But nowhere in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John can we find that Jesus Christ ever approached the governing authorities and worked for the release of criminals from their prison cells.

Nowhere also in the Acts of the Apostles can we find the apostles working for the welfare of the socially and politically oppressed and those people behind bars. Jesus Christ and the apostles never meddled in the affairs of the government. While Jesus Christ distanced Himself from politics, He, however, preached good citizenship:

Matthew 22:21 "...Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. ²²When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way."

Paul, following Christ's example, also preached the same thing.⁷ Peter has this to say on the subject:

1 Peter 2:13 "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; ¹⁴Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Notice how we are led in our comparison of the two periods of Christianity: by facts as recorded in history and current events, and with truth as written in the Holy Bible.

⁶ Isaiah 42:7 "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

⁷ Romans 13:1-7 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: ⁴ For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. ⁵ Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, *but also for conscience sake*. ⁶ For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

THE LIVING BREAD

If modern Christianity, through the many religious sects that compose it, is actively engaged in civic activities, we cannot find such thing in early Christianity. Nowhere in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John can we find Jesus Christ ever involving Himself in civic works, as we find Christian religious sects today. True, Jesus Christ fed 4,000 men on one occasion,⁸ and another 5,000 men, excluding women and children in another instance.⁹ What He fed them was *bread and fishes*. Jesus Christ saw these *bread and fishes* in a different light. He emphatically stated in:

John 6:63 "...the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Literally, the body (or flesh) of the multitude that ate *bread and fishes* were benefited. Our Lord, however, stated that *"the flesh or the body profiteth nothing."* To follow the literal understanding of what happened, it is similar to what Satan saw in Jesus Christ when He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights.¹⁰ The devil saw physical hunger in our Lord. That is why he told Him "command that these stones be made bread." But our Lord, true to His statement in John 6:63, *"the words that I speak...they are spirit,"* rebuked Satan:

Matthew 4:4 "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

⁸ Matthew 15:36-38 "And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. ³⁷ And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full. ³⁸ And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children."

⁹ Matthew 14:19-21 "And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. ²⁰ And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. ²¹ And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

¹⁰ Matthew 4:2-3 "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Here, what was considered as the real bread or food by our Lord is *“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”*¹¹ This is substantiated by the Word of God in:

Jeremiah 15:16 “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.”

The name of the Lord is:

1 Corinthians 8:6 “But to us there is but...one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

It is the word of God that is spiritually eaten. Can we not see here the Word of God as the “Living Bread that gives eternal life?” Jesus stated in:

John 6:48-51 “I am that bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven...”

Many things are brought about by the forgoing verses, including the following:

1. Jesus fed the 4,000 and 5,000 men with *literal bread* and *literal fishes*.
2. The Israelites were fed with literal manna which was their *literal food*, and had died.
3. Jesus was tempted by the Devil *to eat literal bread* out of stones, and our Lord rebuked him.
4. Jesus emphasized the more important food over the physical food. It is the word of God which is the spiritual food.
5. Jeremiah confirmed Jesus' statement that, indeed, “the word of God is the spiritual bread” and is capable of “being eaten.”

¹¹ Deuteronomy 8:3 “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.”

6. Jesus referred to Himself as the "Living Bread."
7. The "Living Bread" is not literal bread, but a spiritual food.
8. Literal manna, the physical food, did not prevent the Israelites from dying in the wilderness; but the "living or spiritual bread," according to Jesus Christ, prevents "death." This should not refer to physical death, but spiritual. The "living bread" gives eternal life.
9. Jesus did not refer to physical death when He said, "A man may eat thereof and not die." He meant eternal life. "This is spiritual life, and not physical life."
10. Jesus was speaking "spiritual things."¹² All of these confirm Christ's statement in:

John 6:63 "...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

11. The apostles realized this after Pentecost. Paul wrote about it in:

Romans 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual..."

12. The phrase, "the words are spirit, and the laws are spiritual," points to the spiritual message of the word of God as the spiritual food that gives eternal life.
13. When Jesus said in John 6:48 "*I am the bread of life,*" this clearly confirms that Jesus Christ in reality is the Word of God:

Revelation 19:13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..."

14. When man reads about bread and manna, he thinks of physical food to satisfy physical hunger. But the Bible is leading us to the spiritual message of all these physical things and events.

¹² 1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: ¹²And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it."

15. When Jesus Christ fed the 4,000 and 5,000 men, they did not only eat bread, but were given fishes as well.
16. In the wilderness, the Israelites were not only fed with manna, but were also given water to drink.
17. In Amos 8:11, God forewarned the people that they would not only suffer famine of spiritual bread, but also thirst for spiritual water.
18. We have seen the following that always go together:
 - Manna and water
 - Bread and fishes
 - Bread and water
19. The Bible gave us the meaning for the symbolism:
 - Bread and Manna for Jesus (John 6:48)
 - Jesus for the Word (Revelation 19:13)
20. Therefore, bread and manna symbolize Jesus Christ Who is the source of eternal life.
21. But Jesus Christ is nowhere to be found today for He is a spirit. It is the Word of God, the "letter," representing Jesus Christ that man has access to that is now the source of eternal life.
22. What do water and fishes symbolize now?
23. Jesus spoke of water as representing the Holy Spirit in:

John 7:38 "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given..."

John 4:14 "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall

give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

24. Now, what do fishes symbolize?

God teaches us how to read the Sacred Scriptures:

Isaiah 28:10 [KJV] "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

This should be distinguished from, "*line upon line, here a little and there a little*" in Isaiah 28:11-12 in support of human precepts and doctrines. God abhors philosophy in spiritual matters.¹³ Therefore it is a case of the Bible explaining itself. This is "spiritual discernment."

1 Corinthians 2:13 "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

25. The Bible speaks of fishes in:

Habakkuk 1:14 "And makest men as the fishes of the sea..."

26. Jesus Christ picked this up when He told His apostles:

Matthew 4:19 "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

27. Literally, if fishes refer to men and the 4,000 and 5,000 men were fed with fishes, the Natural Man would ask, "how could men be fed with men?" "This must be foolishness," he would say. But God anticipated this and says:

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man received not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

¹³ Colossians 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

[Not intellectually, not the dictate of the senses, not emotionally discerned.]

28. The phrase, "4,000 and 5,000 men being fed with fishes, has spiritual significance. If fishes have blood and they refer to men, clearly this points to the blood of Jesus shed on the cross.

Philippians 2:7 "...and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death..."

29. Jesus also spoke of having His blood to be drunk:

John 6:54 "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

30. Clearly Jesus refers to manna and water, and bread and fishes to His "flesh and blood."

John 6:54-56 "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.⁵⁵ for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.⁵⁶ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

31. Manna and bread is spiritual food, and water and blood is spiritual drink.

32. Jesus calls Himself the "living bread" in John 6:48, and referred to water as the Holy Spirit in John 7:38-39.

33. Do we not now see the reason why water and blood are grouped together is because "blood" also refers to the Holy Spirit?

34. Was not the Holy Spirit made available with the fulfillment of the Testament by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ?

35. To recapitulate:

- a. Manna and bread both symbolize the spiritual food. He is Jesus Christ in the flesh. He is the Word, the "letter" of the word.

- b. Water and blood both symbolize spiritual drink. This stands for the Holy Spirit who gives spiritual meaning to the “letter” of the word.
 - c. The “letter” of the word, given spiritual meaning by the Spirit, is the real food and the real drink that gives eternal life.
 - d. Very clearly seen now are manna and water, bread and fishes, flesh and blood, and bread and wine, refer to the literal word and the spiritual message of the word.
 - e. The “letter” of the word with its “spiritual meaning” is the *Truth!*
 - f. It is the truth, the real food that leads man to eternal life!
36. God has removed the slightest of doubt that, indeed, “His word is spirit and the laws are spiritual.”
37. Realizing this, can man now accept what our Lord said in:

John 6:63 “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

It is the spirit, or Holy Spirit that quickens or gives life to the literal word, making it a spiritual word. This is the word that gives eternal life.

38. And by this, the reader must have realized the spiritual significance of physical things and events that happened in the past. They are actually God’s messages today and in the future.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

Ecclesiastes 3:15 “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.”

Jesus Christ fed bread and fishes to the multitude. We cannot find this in the Acts of the Apostles. But the apostles did it spiritually by feeding the people with the living bread, and giving them living water to drink. Perhaps, it is only now that the following statement of our Lord is made clear:

Matthew 25:31-35 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³²And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: ³³And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink..."

The righteous will protest for not having remembered how and when they gave food and drink to the King.

Matthew 25:37 "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?"

But the King will remind them of the things (literal-physical or spiritual?) they had done:

Matthew 25:40 "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Have we noticed the people to whom God is referring as having been given food and water? "Unto one of the least of these my brethren." These are the "poor in spirit" or spiritual babes.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 18:3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

After having seen the great spiritual message of the word of God, can we still think that the food given to the "least of the brethren" is literal bread made of flour or rice, and the water is the drinking water from the faucet?

NO CIVIC AND CHARITABLE WORKS FOR EARLY CHRISTIANS

Modern Christianity, through the religious sects that compose it, interprets the following literally:

Matthew 25:35 "For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

This is the inspiration for the many charitable works of religious organizations and their individual members today: fund-raising and distribution of material goods, and the supply of basic needs to victims of calamities such as earthquakes, floods, typhoons, fire, tsunamis and the like. This is also the basis for the establishment of orphanages, hospitals, and schools, and care for the aged and unwed mothers. Of course these are good works benefiting the body and unquestionably sublime undertakings. Distinction however should be made between spiritual and physical matters. The Bible deals with *spiritual matters*. No wonder, nowhere in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John nor in the Acts of the Apostles can we find Jesus Christ and His apostles and disciples ever doing these things literally. Compassion for the "widows and orphans" is cited in the book of James. In Chapter 15, PURE RELIGION, God explains through His words who the "widows and orphans" are and what kind alms real believers are expected to give.

There was a prophecy for the Messiah providing freedom to the prisoners:

Isaiah 42:7 "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

No account is ever recorded in the Bible of our Lord during His entire ministry freeing a single physical prisoner. But let us remember that this prophecy of "freeing the prisoners" must be fulfilled. This was fulfilled, not physically but *spiritually*. Our Lord set the term for the freedom of prisoners:

John 8:32 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Jews did not understand the spiritual language of our Lord. They could not admit that they were in bondage to any man. They professed that they were the children of Abraham, knowing that the children of Abraham were

free.¹⁴ They were indeed ignorant, Jesus called them spiritually blind, not knowing that our Lord is speaking spiritually:

Galatians 3:7 "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."¹⁵

Because the Jews simply took the word of God to the "letter," they did not understand the prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 49:9 "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. ¹⁰They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them."

1. "Say to the prisoners" does not refer to the physical but to the spiritual prisoners. They are the people bound by falsehood and deceptions – for it is only truth that can set them free.
2. "Go forth to them that are in darkness" does not refer to people who are deprived of the physical light of the sun, moon, stars, or light invented by man. God is referring to those who are in spiritual darkness who cannot see the spiritual light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and the truth (John 14:6).
3. "Feed in the ways" refers to spiritual feeding with the living bread as discussed.
4. "Pasture for the sheep" points to Jesus Christ shepherding the spiritual sheep – the real Christians. But Christ is nowhere to be found, for He is a spirit. He is, however, present, represented by the Word of God. It is the Word of God that is spiritually shepherding the real Christians.

¹⁴ John 8:33 "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

¹⁵ Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

5. The spiritual sheep will never get hungry, for they will be fed with the *living bread* (word) and with the spiritual *springs of water* (revelation of Holy Spirit on the word).

TAKING STRANGERS IN

"I was a stranger and ye took me in." Strangers are people outside the "household of God."¹⁶ To take the "stranger in" is to welcome people who do not yet belong to the family of God. That is what Jesus and His apostles did during their time – taking spiritual strangers in the house of the Lord, in the family of God, the spiritual church and not a physical congregation as we see religious sect proselytizing in *Christianity Today*. Spiritual strangers are the lost sheep that our Lord, the truth, is looking for.¹⁷ Not just anybody can be a spiritual stranger. Only the "poor in spirit."

*Psalms 69:8 "I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
and an alien unto my mother's children."*

They are the people *"whose names are written in the book of life since the foundation of the world,"*¹⁸ who are only waiting for the truth to come. Upon hearing the truth, that is, the invitation of the people at the right hand of the King, the stranger goes to the "house" and there he is reunited with the *"other children of the mother."* Let us remember that not everybody who hears the truth accepts it.

Strangers could not have referred to literal strangers, for as Jesus said, *"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit."* *Christianity Today* may be thinking of them as the aged, the unwed mothers, and the orphans who need physical help. But let not the intellect and feeling twist the spiritual message

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

¹⁷ Luke 15:3-7 "And he spake this parable unto them, saying, ⁴ What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵ And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. ⁷ I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

¹⁸ Revelation 13:8 "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Revelation 17:8 "...they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world..."

of the word. Man may be thinking of help for the physical well-being of his fellowmen. This must also be done, but properly distinguished as civic work profiting the body. Spiritually speaking, God is harvesting souls and not bodies. Did not God put premium on the soul over the body?

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

John 6:63 "...the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Civic and charitable works should be done, but these should be differentiated from the spiritual deeds of our Lord and His Apostles. Let us not confuse what is good in the eyes of men with what is acceptable to God according to His word. The distinction is found in Chapter 15: PURE RELIGION.

CLOTHING THE NAKED

God gives us the clue on who the spiritually naked are. Man realized his spiritual nakedness right in the garden of Eden upon the fall. He became aware of the loss of his garment of salvation. People who are aware of "spiritual nakedness" search for the garment of salvation.

Isaiah 61:10 "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

It is only the people at the right hand of the King¹⁹, the spiritual sheep, who have this kind of clothes. This is the spiritual garment that can be shared with the spiritually naked.

Galatians 3:27 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Romans 13:14 "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh..."

¹⁹ Matthew 25:33 "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

How far is the literal from the spiritual! Here Jesus Christ, the *Truth*, is referred to as the spiritual garment. "While it is easy to profess to have Jesus Christ as the spiritual garment for the spiritually naked, not everybody can share the *Truth*. Spiritual garment, therefore, is the truth which covers man's spiritual nakedness. Who can honestly profess membership in Christianity Yesterday, the pure and perfect Christianity? Who can claim to have clothed the naked when the King comes to separate the sheep from the goats?

"I WAS SICK AND YE VISITED ME"

We have seen the difference between the literal and spiritual meaning of the word. The physically sick are person suffering from physical ailment like fever, tuberculosis, cancer, and all sorts of diseases. Physical disease may lead to physical death of the body. The spiritually sick may be physically healthy, but suffering from spiritual malady:

Psalms 41:4 "I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee."

Look how the Bible explains itself! Some examples of spiritual diseases:

Galatians 5:19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

We must remember that it is the people at the right hand of the King, the real Christians, to whom this is addressed. They must be spiritually healthy. Can people on the left hand, the spiritual goats, who are themselves spiritually sick, be able to "visit the sick?" Spiritual diseases lead to spiritual death of the soul. Here is what God says in:

Ezekiel 18:20 "The soul that sinneth, it shall die..."

The kind of death of the soul:

Revelation 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part

in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Man conceived religion with its sets of virtuous norms as the way to God. The Almighty stooping down to this level, through James, expressed its purity as:

James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Every religion – Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, among others – adopts this practice of "visiting the fatherless and the widows" as a major policy. But God has His concept of who the "fatherless and the widows" are. Details are taken up in Chapter 15: PURE RELIGION. Who can accept that the laws of God are spiritual?

Romans 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual..."

"I WAS IN PRISON AND YE CAME UNTO ME"

"Visiting the sick" equally applies to visiting the prisoners. We have seen the spiritual prisoners. They are those who are bound by falsehood and deception. Spiritual prisoners are freed only by the truth:

John 8:32 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Again our Lord referred to the people at the right hand of the King, the real Christians, who would do this work of visiting and comforting the prisoners.

CONCLUSION

Today, the followers of the "teachings of Christ" are called by the name of their respective denominations. We have seen some of the beliefs and practices in the first century followers of Christ. They were called *Christians* after the name of the *Lord*, Jesus Christ.²⁰

Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 8:6 "But to us *there is but one God, the Father... and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom...*"

mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

The name of "the Lord our God is one Lord"²¹ is revealed in:

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

The *Name* of the Father, the *Name* of the Son, and the *Name* of the *Holy Spirit* is revealed to Peter in:

Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Details of the name and identity of God and Jesus Christ is discussed in Chapter 5: GOD IS IDENTIFYING HIMSELF! Shall we not listen to Him?

Perhaps the word of God becomes more spiritually alive if we compare Jesus Christ and His Disciples with religious people in our time.

The battle among sects:

1. At that time, the Jews, known people of God, were also divided into religious sects: the Sect of the Pharisees and the Sect of the Sadducees.
 - Today, Christianity is divided into sects and denominations.
2. Common source of preaching material
 - Both Jesus Christ and His Disciples, and the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees, were preaching the word of God, called the Laws.
 - Today both real Christians and the different religious sects are preaching the Holy Bible that contains the word of God.
3. Common claim of knowing God
 - The sect of the Pharisees and the Sadducees claimed knowledge and recognition of the God of their father Abraham.

²¹ Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD."

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

- Christian sects today also claim recognition of Jesus Christ.
4. Claim of knowing God refuted
 - Our Lord Jesus at that time told His listeners in John 8:54-55 "*...it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him...*"
 - Christianity Today's false claim of clear recognition of the God of the Bible is exposed by the leaders' own admission that, "the relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remains a great mystery."
 - God is a mystery.
 5. Common claim of being "chosen" of God
 - The Jews under the leadership of the Scribes, Pharisees, priests, and elders claimed sonship of Abraham.
 - Today's members of religious sects also claim sonship of God.
 - The Jews took pride in exploiting the name of their father Abraham.
 - Today, religious sects claim salvation in the name of Jesus Christ.
 6. Limited to the "letter" of the law/word
 - The sect of the Pharisees and Sadducees were limited to the "letter" of the law.
 - Christian sects also take the "letter" of the word (food, Sabbath, tithes, recognition of Jesus, among others).
 7. Jesus Christ misunderstood
 - The Jews told Jesus that He has devil and mad.²²
 - Today, people speaking the spiritual language of God are considered irrational.
 8. On ecumenism
 - The sect of the Pharisees and Sadducees fought each other. But when confronted by Jesus Christ they united against Him.
 - Today, Christian sects vary in their doctrines. When challenged with the *Truth*, they unite against it.
 9. Persons of distinction in the law/word
 - The Jews recognized the learned of the laws like Gamaliel and the Scribes
 - Today, Christians looked up at Theologians and Bible Scholars

²²John 10:20 "And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?"

10. Exaltation of religious leaders²³
 - Teachers of the Law were called Rabbi
 - Today, teachers of the word are called Pastors, Priests, and Ministers. Some are addressed Holy, Father, Reverend.²⁴
11. Distinction of religious leaders from the laity
 - Broadening of phylacteries, and enlargement of borders of garments²⁵
 - Today, religious leaders wear robes, a cross, standing collar
12. Distinction of religious leaders in social activities on sitting position²⁶
 - Uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues
 - Today, sect leaders are seated at the head or prominent tables
13. Command respect in spiritual matters²⁷
 - Greetings in the street²⁸
 - Today, the same practice
14. Real Christianity compared
 - Jesus Christ spoke in parables and His Disciples rely on Him for explanation.²⁹
 - Today, real Christians do not take upon themselves the interpretation of the word of God.

²³ Matthew 23:8 “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

²⁴ Psalms 111:9 “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: *holy* and *reverend* is his name.”

²⁵ Matthew 23:5 “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.”

²⁶ Matthew 23:6 “And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues.”

²⁷ James 2:9 “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

²⁸ Matthew 23:7 “And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”

²⁹ When Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it,” the religious people gave meaning to it. The Disciples waited for almost 3 years for our Lord to explain by “demonstration.”

SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP AMONG CHRISTIANS

God commands His people to have fellowship among themselves:

Hebrews 10:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

To be noted, it is not like the religious fellowships or services we have today, where somebody who is looked up preaches in the chapels, churches and Cathedrals. Look here if God does not guide His chosen to spiritual fellowship:

Romans 1:11 "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; ¹²That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

Philippians 1:27 "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

1 Corinthians 16:17 "I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. ¹⁸For they have refreshed my spirit and yours..."

The apostles and disciples did not build chapels, churches, and cathedrals because there was no need for these structures to contain many people. The chosen are not many but only few.³⁰ To them it was a simple sharing of God's *revelation of His words*, not man's explanation, that serves as spiritual food. Therefore it is still Jesus Christ, the Shepherd or Teacher, feeding them as in the Last Supper.

Paul wanted to listen to the Christians, that according to him, "*I may be comforted from your faith,*" as you also may be comforted from mine. The fellowship, therefore, is not a "one-way" talk from the pulpit, as modern apostles are doing now. Rather, it is a "mutual sharing of faith through the

³⁰ Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

word of God.”³¹ Is not the word of God the “spiritual food?” Therefore, as in the Last Supper, the Christians “eat together on the same table and Jesus Christ serving them.” It is Jesus Christ who served *bread* and *wine* – not Peter, not John, not Paul. The “*bread*” is the literal word, while “*wine*” symbolizing the blood of Christ, the shedding of which led to the availability of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that reveals the spiritual message of the word by “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

1 Corinthians 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

1 Corinthians 2:13 “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

FOUR CLASSES OF PEOPLE IN THE EYES OF GOD

God is love (1 John 4:7) and it is His will that all people would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). So He gave His word to the prophets and apostles (2 Peter 1:21), writing these in a book we call the Holy Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). However these are the kinds of people who treat God’s word:

FIRST – People belonging to other religions (Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.) unreservedly rejecting the Holy Bible.

SECOND – The Israelites (Jews) to whom God’s word is entrusted, but they only accept part of it. They form the religion of Judaism. Warning:

Deuteronomy 4:2 “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

THIRD – People believing in the Holy Bible but adding man’s word, called religious traditions. To this belong the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church. Warning:

Proverbs 30:6 “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

³¹ Jeremiah 15:16 “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.”

FOURTH – People belonging to the Christian religion, accepting the Holy Bible in its entirety and calling themselves “Full Gospel Believers,” but divided it into sects or denominations because they believe the word of God “is of private interpretation.”

Since the word of God does not pass away,³² it is like prophecies. Thus the warning:

2 Peter 1:20 “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”

Remaining unnoticed is that God speaks in parables (Ezekiel 20:49) and Jesus Christ was prophesied to speak “dark sayings of old” (Psalms 78:2). This came to pass:

Mark 4:34 “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”

Are Peter, John, James, Paul or any professing servant of God given the authority to “expound the parables? The word of God is like “prophecy” projected to happen all the time.³³ This truth is instituted on the basis, “Jesus is the word” (John 1:14), and is the “same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Only God can interpret His words by demonstration through His very words. But leaders of each sect take upon themselves the capability and authority to “expound” on the word resulting in different interpretations.

FIFTH – People belonging to the Christian religion who accept the Holy Bible in its entirety. They humble themselves like “little children” (Matthew 18:3), that they solely depend on God’s interpretation, actually by demonstration, through His words. The following therefore became their by-word.

Mark 4:34 “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”

³² Mathew 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

³³ Matthew 5:18 “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Christ's disciples are found all the time till the end of the world, as He promised to be with them:

Matthew 28:20 "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Jesus Christ calls "many" people (Second, Third, Fourth), but only a "few" truly believe in Him. The "many called" ones do not accept the following:

Matthew 18:3 "... Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 11:25 "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Isaiah 28:9 [KJV only] "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts."

James 1:5-8 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Who can accept this truth in the word of our Lord?

John 6:63 "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

"Many" people belonging to the *Second, Third, and Fourth* benefit from the word of God, *morally*, with the "cleansing the cup on the outside."

Matthew 23:25 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of

the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

Example: For the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," "cleanliness on the outside of the cup" is simply being honest not to take anything of value not owned. The *Fifth* class of people see "cleanliness of the inside of the cup" on this example, as passing through the "door" (John 10:4), which is the *Truth* (John 14:6).

John 10:1 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

The "few" people belonging to the *Fifth* benefit both *Spiritually*, "cleansing the cup in the inside," and *morally*, "cleansing the cup on the outside." They are therefore exempt from the rebuke in:

Matthew 23:26 "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

To whom does the following truth apply?

John 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Very clearly these are taken from the *Fifth*, but not to all because Christ gave this condition. Judas Iscariot did not overcome as warned.

Revelation 3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life..."

