

What Does It Mean  
to  
DENY CHRIST?

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## **What Does It Mean to Deny Christ?**

Jesus said, ". . . Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33). What does it mean to deny Christ? This article will reveal how thousands today are denying Christ. You cannot afford to be confused on this important matter!

It was the prophetic failure of 1972 and the doctrinal changes of 1973–74 which left thousands of members of the Church of God bewildered and confused. Of those who left the organization, the majority no longer have confidence in anything taught by the Worldwide Church of God. Hundreds of them have completely repudiated the doctrine they once believed—and are now convinced of nothing. Others feel only Christ's coming can validate the past. To all these people, conviction was not based upon what they read in their Bibles—but rather upon what was taught by the Church. When they lost confidence in the Church they no longer believed Christ's words.

Jesus said those who reject His Word reject Him (John 12:48). Those who deny Christ's Word deny Christ. And those who deny Him will be denied before the Father in heaven! (Matthew 10:33.)

What does it mean to deny Christ? Is this done in the verbal sense only? Before we examine the answers to these questions, let us first ask ourselves: Who is Christ?

### **Who Is Christ?**

Christ is the Son of God. His appearance on this earth as a mortal human being, was foretold by the prophets. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah when he said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . ." (Isaiah 9:6). Many other Old Testament prophecies foretold Christ's coming. It is clear from the Scriptures that prior to His human birth, Jesus was the God of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 10:1–4). His appearance in the flesh was a necessary part of God's redemptive plan for mankind. Jesus Christ was the sacrificial Lamb—the propitiation required to take away the sins of the world (John 3:16; 6:51; 12:27, Matthew 20:28, Hebrew 2:9, 14–15, 18). Born in the flesh of the seed of David (Romans 1:3), He brought God's message of salvation to mankind (Hebrew 1:2). He was the One of whom God said, ". . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17).

Jesus Christ was the Logos, or Spokesman. He was the Word of God personified—made flesh. As Creator of the universe, He existed with God the Father from the beginning and was the true Light sent to enlighten the world (John 1:1–3, 7–9). Jesus said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. . ." (John 14:6). He brought to light the

spiritual truth of the New Testament dispensation (John 1:17). Jesus said it was through Him only, that salvation was available (John 14:6; 10:7–9, Acts 4:12). Being the light of God's Truth, He alone could enlighten men and show them the only way to eternal life (Luke 1:78–79, John 8:12; 12:46). He was the true, spiritual light of the world (John 1:9; 3:16–21)— the Spokesman or Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Jesus, alone, was the perfect example for mankind to follow. He did not come to live a perfect life in our stead. He came to die in our stead and to set the example (1 Peter 2:21, 1 John 2:6). He came to reveal the full spiritual application of God's Law in our lives (Matthew 5:17). He came to "fill it full"—to expand it to the full, spiritual significance God originally intended (Isaiah 42:21).

### **Commissioned by the Father**

As the Spokesman or Logos, Jesus was commissioned to speak only that which the Father had instructed. Jesus repeatedly stated that the words He spoke were from God the Father (John 3:34; 12:49). He was commissioned to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set at liberty the bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18–19). Jesus was under the authority of the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3). He said that, of Himself, He could do nothing (John 5:19–20). He came to do the will of the One who sent Him (John 4:34; 6:38, 57). His doctrine was not His own, but that of the Father who sent Him (John 7:16). He did not seek His own will, but the will of the Father (John 5:30).

Jesus said those who sought to do God's will would be able to understand true doctrine (John 7:17). The basis of their conviction would be the words of Jesus, which in their entirety would include the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments (Matthew 4:4). Accepting Jesus Christ would mean accepting the embodiment of all the Bible truths recorded in the sacred Scriptures. It would mean accepting everything Christ represented. Since He was the God of the Old Testament, the Word of God found in the Old Testament would form an essential part of the doctrinal beliefs of Christians. Those who accept Christ's words accept the entirety of the Bible.

### **His Ascension Necessary for Salvation**

The Apostle John wrote, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11–12).

It is the Holy Spirit which gives all true Christians the potentiality of eternal life. Those who "have" Christ believe and practice what Jesus Christ taught, because they have received God's Holy Spirit.

It was necessary for Christ to ascend to the heavens before the Holy Spirit could be given (John 7:38–39). Christ told the disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Jesus told His disciples that while the Holy Spirit was then *with* them, the time was coming when it would dwell *in* them (John 14:16–17). Jesus said the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of truth. Therefore, all called and converted Christians are led by the Spirit into Truth, not error! The doctrine they believe is understood by divine revelation and cannot be changed!

Upon Christ's ascension, the same Spirit that energized and guided Him came into the collective body—the Church—and inspired each Christian disciple to believe and practice the same things Jesus Christ did when He was in the flesh. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ lives His life in each son of God (Galatians 2:20, 1 John 3:24).

John said we could *know* the Spirit of God. He wrote, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come [Greek: 'comes'] in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come [comes] in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:2–3). The Greek word for the verb "come" indicates a continuous action. Therefore, the meaning is that Jesus Christ *comes* into the life of each individual Christian through the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ *dwells* in each Christian by the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13–16). It is Christ in us that is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Paul described what takes place in the life of every Christian when he receives the Holy Spirit. He said those who are led by the Holy Spirit seek spiritual things (Romans 8:5–6). He said those who are *led* by the Spirit of God *are* the sons of God (Romans 8:9, 14). Those who have "put on Christ" are overcoming many of the lusts and evil drives of human nature (Galatians 5:16–17, 24). They are able to manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit, enumerated in Galatians 5:22–23. These fruits include love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Christians live by the faith *of* the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). They abide in Christ and walk as He walked (1 John 2:6).

### **The Word Must Be Revealed**

Whether one comes to accept and believe in Jesus Christ is solely dependent upon a divine call from God. Jesus said, "*No man* can come to me, except the Father which hath

sent me draw him. . ." (John 6:44). It is by the direct intervention of God's Spirit that one is called to a knowledge of the Truth. No man is able to teach himself spiritual truths of the Bible—for Jesus said, ". . . they shall be *all* taught of God. . ." (John 6:45). It is through the power of God's Spirit that man is able to comprehend the significance of Christ and the meaning of His words (John 14:6, 26). Complete Bible understanding and doctrinal truths do not result from "scholarship," study, human intellect, or intelligence (Matthew 11:25–27). They come by the direct intervention of God's Spirit and by divine revelation (Matthew 16:15–17). The Word of God must be revealed!

Once the significance of Christ and the meaning of His Word are revealed, the individual must walk by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). Those who begin to doubt the initial revelation—concerning the significance of Christ's sacrifice and the meaning of God's Word—are destined to fall away from the Truth. While they generally do not abandon religion, they will most certainly become confused and disoriented regarding what they once knew, understood, practiced, and believed! So Christians must live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). They must not allow what they see to distract them from Truth and understanding. The Truth they possess comes to them by divine revelation only! It is those who exercise faith, living by what they understand (not by what they see), whom Jesus said are truly blessed (John 20:29). These are the ones who confess Christ in their lives.

### **How Do We Confess Christ?**

Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). How do we confess Christ?

It is a common assumption that the only way a Christian can confess Christ is by verbal expression. While it is true that no man—while speaking in the Spirit—calls Jesus accursed (1 Corinthians 12:3), it is also true that many who "confess Christ" are in reality denying Him (Titus 1:16). Therefore, "confessing Christ" involves more than proclaiming Christ's name!

Praising God and giving thanks is certainly one way to confess Christ (Romans 14:11; 15:9, Hebrew 13:15). So is acknowledging or declaring Christ publicly (Romans 10:9–10, Matthew 10:32). But the most important way the Christian confesses Christ is by living and practicing Christianity—by living Christ's life through the power of the Holy Spirit!

The Bible warns against those who "profess Christ" (the same Greek word is used for "confess") but in works deny him (Titus 1:16)! In reality, it is those who not only acknowledge Christ publicly when the occasion calls for it—but also practice Christianity in their daily lives—who truly confess Christ (1 Timothy 6:12, 1 John 4:2–3)!

## How Do We Deny Christ?

One way is a verbal denial of Christ. Peter, under great stress at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, did this (Matthew 26:69–75). Jesus spoke of those who would deny Him before men (Matthew 10:33). This obviously includes a literal denial but may not be limited to it. Peter told the Jews in his day that they had delivered Jesus up and had denied Him in the presence of Pilate (Acts 3:13). The Jews had a long record of denying God's true servants (Acts 7:35, 51–52). They certainly denied that Jesus was the Christ. John said those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are liars and are anti-Christ (1 John 2:22).

But of a far greater number are those who profess Christianity but fail to live up to the Christian requirements. Paul said these people deny Christ! This includes those who fail to provide for their households (1 Timothy 5:8). When they deny the faith they obviously deny Christ. Others include those who deny Christ in their works—being abominable, disobedient, and reprobate (Titus 1:16). Some in the ministry deny Christ by turning to doctrinal perversion. Specifically mentioned is the perversion of grace into license to do evil (Jude 4). In relationship to the ministry, Matthew 7:21–23 condemns those who do not practice what they preach.

It is those failing to live up to the Christian requirements who are included among those who deny Christ!

Another method of denying Christ—and a condition which will be particularly extant in the latter days—is a denial of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:5). Godliness can come about only as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit. But rejection of divine revelation, as well as the need to strive for the high standard of righteousness which Jesus proclaimed (Matthew 5:48), repudiates godliness. While a form of righteousness is touted, the power of God which leads men into a knowledge of the Truth is rejected in the name of "scholarship." And due to ungodly doctrinal changes, there is no longer any recognition of the need to overcome self through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the "watering down" of convictions leads many to inadvertently reject Christ—not only in what they believe, but also in their manner of living. Because worldliness and compromise with revealed Truth become fashionable and popular, most lose the faith they once believed.

It is the repudiation of Truth on a vast scale, by doctrinal changes and heretical teachings, which the Bible emphasizes as the major way Christ will be denied (2 Peter 2:1–2). Those who deny the Faith (true doctrine) deny Christ. What took place in the first century is only a type of what has occurred recently. The significance of Christ's sacrifice has been overlooked completely in the quest to satiate longing desires (which were held in check until prophetic failure and unauthorized doctrinal changes occurred—2 Peter 2:1). Those who reject the faith for whatever reasons, reject Christ (Revelation 2:13, 2 Peter 2:1–2, John 12:48). And those who reject Christ deny Christ—He is no longer their Lord!

Those who reject Christ reject His authority over their lives. Those former Christians who flout God and Christ by an attitude of independence, self-will, and disobedience have rejected Christ's name. It is those who are faithful and true to the doctrine revealed who have not denied His name or authority over their lives (Revelation 3:8). When one rejects Christ's authority, he has denied Christ. Those who have repudiated the doctrinal truths of the Church of God—as a result of the upheaval of past years—have rejected Christ! Men—not the Truth of God—should have been rejected. Those who have rejected true doctrine—either by turning completely away from what they once believed, or by accepting unauthorized doctrinal changes initiated by the Church itself—have rejected Christ. They have denied the name and the authority of Christ!

### **Propheesied Denial of Christ**

Denial of Christ is what was to become so rampant in the latter days. Notice 2 Peter 2:1–2. If this text does not apply to the last days, then there is no relevancy to any of the New Testament. Scripture tells us Christ is to be denied because of false teachers who introduce private heresies. That is, false teachings will first be circulated among the ministry and certain lay members, then unofficially accepted for their popularity. Eventually these heresies will gain official status—and the Truth originally believed will be maligned, then totally repudiated. The vast majority of the membership will accept these false teachings, Peter says. But this repudiation of doctrine will be a denial of Christ!

Notice 2 Peter 3:3–4. Here, scoffers were prophesied to reject the teaching concerning the Second Coming of Christ. This text could apply only to those who once believed and understood the truth about Christ's imminent return. The motivation of these scoffers is their own lust. In their desire to live ungodly lifestyles, they repudiate the times in which they live and reject the concept of an imminent return of Jesus Christ, their final Judge. The time of this scoffing and rejection of Christ is specifically stated as "the last days"!

Paul spoke of the denial of Christ during the last days (2 Timothy 3:1, 5). He said one of the causes of perilous times would be the denial of God's Spirit as a source of power to the believer.

In 2 Timothy 4:1–4, Paul again indicates what would happen near or at the return of Jesus Christ. God's people would not endure sound doctrine. Because of lust, they would gravitate to teachers who would preach what they wanted to hear. They would go off into error and fables.

The Apostle John tells us the last times will be characterized by the spirit of antichrist. While "the last time" generally refers to the time period after the first appearance of Jesus Christ, it is by no means limited to the first century A.D. John said the antichrist would

depart from Truth—not from a church (1 John 2:19)! The vast majority of the Church did depart from Truth during the latter part of the first century. Only a remnant remained loyal to the Truth and they were no longer recognized as the Church. The visible church which apostatized, is the one which was recognized by the world.

The antichrist denies Christ. Since the Bible indicates this would be done primarily by the repudiation of doctrine, this is exactly what we find John writing about in 1 John 2. John tells us Christ was denied (v. 22). He then goes on to say that what the brethren heard or learned from the beginning is what they should abide by. He warned them not to go off into doctrinal error as a result of false teachers or seducers (vv. 24–26). The brethren had no need to be taught again because they had been led by the Holy Spirit into original truth (v. 27). Therefore, they should abide in Christ by remaining faithful to the Truth initially given them. It is those practicing righteousness by obeying Christ's instruction, who are righteous (v. 29).

This is why John went on to say that the "spirits" must be put to the test (1 John 4:1–3). It is those confessing Christ—living His life, by the Holy Spirit—who are of God. Those who profess the name of Christ but refuse to follow His example, have the spirit of antichrist—not the Spirit of God (1 John 4:3). They are of the world and the world listens to them (v. 5), but the true people of God are not recognized by the world (1 John 3:1–2).

John warns that many deceivers would preach the name of Jesus and call themselves Christian—but would demonstrate by the fruits of their lives, that they had rejected the Holy Spirit (2 John 6). That is why he warned Christians not to depart from the Truth they originally received (vv. 7–8)! He warned that those who take the lead or set themselves up as teachers but do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, are not of God—regardless of any claim made otherwise (v. 9). It is these teachers who must be utterly rejected (vv. 10–11).

The spirit of antichrist is contrary to God's revealed way and to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the spirit of doctrinal perversion and rebellion against the Law of God. Those who follow the spirit of antichrist deny Christ. They deny Christ by failing to live up to what God requires of all His children. They fail to live up to the Christian requirements of righteousness because they repudiate revealed truth. They deny the power of the Holy Spirit as a source of godly influence in their lives. They have rejected Christ as their Lord and Master. They choose to set themselves up as teachers and representatives of God and Christ while at the same time rejecting Christ's teachings. They substitute the ideas of men in place of Bible truth and choose to worship men rather than God.

## **Conclusion**

Confessing or denying Christ is done primarily by either living or refusing to live Christianity as a Way of life. Public acknowledgment of Christ is not, in itself, sufficient

proof that one really confesses Christ. There are many who profess Christ publicly but fail to live up to what is required of them. They deny Christ. Those who turn from revealed Truth also deny Christ. Those who either reject the Holy Spirit as a source of inspiration to lead them into Truth—or who substitute a "watered down" version of righteousness in place of the high spiritual standard—deny Christ. Those who refuse to heed Christ's Word (as recorded in the sacred Scriptures) because they have become disillusioned with men have also denied Christ. They have rejected Christ's name or authority over their lives.

Those who truly confess Christ—who are not guilty of denying Him—are those who through the help of God's Holy Spirit, live up to the requirements placed upon every Christian. They recognize they were led to the knowledge of the Truth by the Holy Spirit and they adhere to that true doctrine. They do not "water down" the high standard of righteousness by changing doctrine to make it easier for themselves. And they do not reject Christ's teachings because they have become disillusioned with a church leadership.

It is those faithful and loyal to revealed doctrine—and those only—who have not denied Christ!