

FOUR NAMES FOR CHRISTIANS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Ac. 11:26**.
- B. The word "Christian" appears three times in the New Testament - **Ac. 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt. 4:16**.
- C. Yet this is *not the only word* used in the New Testament to describe the Lord's people.
- D. The words used in the inspired books of the New Testament are not simply coincidental. They were used by the Holy Spirit for a purpose - **1 Cor. 2:13**.
- E. *Each term used to characterize the Lord's people tells us something we need to know about what Christians are.* We lose something important if we fail to understand these terms and fail to use them.
- F. What then can we learn from the following four names for Christians in the New Testament?

I. SAINTS

- A. "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be *saints*, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (**1 Cor. 1:2**). Cf. **Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1**; etc.
- B. Saints are those who are "sanctified" or "set apart" to be the Lord's special ("holy") possession - **1 Pt. 2:9**.
- C. As SAINTS, the Lord's people are characterized by HOLINESS.
- D. By the gospel, God has "called" us to be His saints, His special people - **2 Thess. 2:13,14**. Cf. **Rom. 1:7**.
- E. Some things are "fitting" for saints, and some things are not - **Eph. 5:3,4**.
- F. We must give *conscious thought and effort* in maintaining our special character before the Lord - **2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pt. 1:13-16**.

II. DISCIPLES

- A. "So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the *disciples* were first called *Christians* in Antioch" (**Ac. 11:26**).
- B. To be a disciple is to be a follower, learner, or student of someone else. Christians are the Lord's *learners*! The Lord wants us to learn three things from Him:
 1. **Knowledge**. Understanding and wisdom about what to do and how to do it.
 2. **Character**. Development of the inner traits of character possessed by the Lord Himself.
 3. **Competence**. Skill and ability in living and serving as a Christian.
- C. As DISCIPLES, the Lord's people are characterized by KNOWLEDGE.
- D. On the Lord's Day, it is the *disciples* who come together to eat the Lord's Supper - **Ac. 20:7**.
- E. It requires "discipline" to be a "disciple." We will not come to know what the Lord wants us to know without making a serious commitment to the process - **1 Cor. 9:27**. Cf. **Jn. 8:31; 13:35**.

1. Counting the cost of discipleship. Cf. **Lk. 14:28**.
2. Making the commitment to *be* a disciple. *Having counted the cost, we must actually pay the price!*

III. BELIEVERS

- A. "Be an example to the *believers* in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in *faith*, in purity" (**1 Tim. 4:12**).
- B. As BELIEVERS, the Lord's people are characterized by FAITH.
 1. It is not surprising that we are called believers — the gospel is referred to as "the faith" (**Jd. 3**).
 2. It is essentially *our faith that makes us what we are* as Christians - **Rom. 1:16,17**.
- C. We are those who "walk by faith" (**2 Cor. 5:7**). Our lives are built on *trust*.

IV. BRETHREN

- A. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other" (**2 Thess. 1:3**). Cf. **Rom 8:29**.
 1. The relationship of siblings denotes affection - **1 Pt. 1:22**. Cf. **2 Cor. 13:11**.
 2. But it also denotes equality - **Mt. 23:8**. Cf. **Jas. 2:1**.
- B. Being brethren adds a special dimension to even the ordinary blessings of life. Cf. **1 Thess. 5:26**.
- C. Being *brethren* ought to make a huge difference when *disagreements* arise. Cf. **Gen. 13:8**.
 1. Among brethren, the relationship is more important than any personal disadvantage.
 2. A brother would rather "be defrauded" and quietly suffer wrong than engage in a warfare that would dishonor the family - **1 Cor. 6:5-7**. Cf. **Jas. 4:11,12**.
 3. Brethren are "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (**Jas. 1:19,20**). Cf. **5:9**.
- D. As BRETHREN, the Lord's people are characterized by LOVE. Cf. **Col. 3:12-15**; **1 Jn. 3:14**; **4:20,21**.

Conclusion

- A. Speaking of the so-called "Christian graces," Peter said, "If these things *are yours and abound . . .*" (**2 Pt. 1:8**). With respect to the four qualities above, we may ask ourselves:
 1. Are these characteristics ours:
 - a. **Holiness** (as saints)?
 - b. **Knowledge** (as disciples)?
 - c. **Faith** (as believers)?
 - d. **Love** (as brethren)?
 2. Are we *growing and abounding* in them? Is our "progress . . . evident to all" (**1 Tim. 4:15**)?
- B. If we would be the Lord's church, we must not only adopt the *outward forms* of the church found in the New Testament; we must also develop the *inner character* of Christians in the New Testament.
- C. Knowing that we described in these four ways ought to help us in *setting our spiritual goals* for the future.