

Does Jesus Recognize Today's Christianity?

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The church of God has long linked the return of Jesus Christ in Revelation 11:15 to the Feast of Trumpets. While we do not know the exact date of His return, it certainly feels like the Great Tribulation preceding His return could be just around the corner. But one thing is clear: He *will* return, and Scripture outlines His role on that day.

Have you ever imagined that moment when He descends to stand on the Mount of Olives, surrounded by all those who kept His Word? But who are they? The religion bearing His name has splintered into countless groups, so that Christianity today resembles a patchwork quilt stitched together from pieces of all kinds of traditions. Catholics, Baptists, Evangelicals, Charismatics, Methodists, Calvinists, Lutherans, et al.—all with distinct beliefs that often contradict one another. So how can anyone know who is truly teaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, the gospel Jesus preached (Mark 1:14)?

This religious confusion begs the question: If all these dissimilar groups represent Christianity, would Christ find Himself welcome among them? Would He identify with *any* of these denominations? Would He walk into any of these churches and say, “Yes, these are My people”?

The apostle Paul reminds us, in both Ephesians 1:22 and Colossians 1:18, that Jesus is the Head of His church. In I Peter 2:21, we are reminded that Christ suffered for us and left us an example to follow. Paul echoes this in I Corinthians 11:1, writing, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” The apostle John urges us “to walk just as He walked” (I John 2:6).

Clearly, Jesus should be our example in all spiritual matters. By examining what He taught and how He lived, we can discover who He truly leads. In this endeavor, we will explore:

- » what Jesus thought about God's law,
- » how He worshipped,
- » and what He will be looking for when He returns.

Jesus' Attitude Toward the Law

Despite their differences, most Christian groups agree on one primary doctrine: the Old Testament law was abolished by Jesus on the cross. They see God's law as a burden, a curse, and irrelevant to Christianity today.

Their argument usually goes like this: God gave the law to the Jews at Sinai (though it was actually all Israel), and once Jesus brought grace, that form of law and worship was no longer required. However, by rewinding the story a bit, to a time long before Moses ever climbed Mount Sinai, we can see God saying something powerful to Isaac. In Genesis 26:4-5, He says that through Isaac's descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed, "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

This event occurred 400 years before Sinai, which means that Abraham, the spiritual father of the faithful, followed God's commandments long before Moses. In addition, consider Noah, who preached righteousness centuries before Abraham (II Peter 2:5).

In Exodus 16, weeks before the Ten Commandments were given, God taught the Israelites about the Sabbath. When they disobeyed, He asked Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?" (Exodus 16:28). Obviously, the Sabbath was already part of God's law.

So, the common claim that the law began with Moses holds no water. Yet most nominal Christians dismiss it as "Old Testament stuff." This stubborn stance against God's law makes us consider what Jesus had to say about it. He is the Head of the church, and His Word has the final say.

In Mark 7:6-8, He rebukes religious leaders for making God's Word ineffective through their traditions. He plainly states in Matthew 5:17 that He

did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Throughout His ministry, He condemned and rejected human traditions that distorted the purpose of His law.

In Matthew 19:17, Jesus connects eternal life to keeping the commandments: “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” In John 14:15, He says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Our Savior teaches that love and obedience go hand in hand.

He did not diminish the law; instead, He raised it to a higher standard. He taught that hatred breaks the commandment against murder (Matthew 5:27-30), and lust breaks the one against adultery (Matthew 5:31-32). That is not dismissing the law by any means, but making the requirements stronger. He taught keeping God’s law in its spirit, not just in the letter.

What about His disciples? Paul states in Romans 7:22, “I delight in the law of God.” Would such an intelligent and godly man delight in something he believed had been abolished? That makes no sense. Decades after Jesus’ death, John writes in I John 2:3, “We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar.” Do his words sound like he believes the law no longer matters? Not even close!

So, who teaches that the law is no longer required, and why? Jesus did not, and neither did Paul or John. Jesus preached repentance and turning from sin, and so did His apostles.

But consider: If the law has been nailed to the cross, thus abolished, then sin cannot exist because the law defines sin (Romans 7:7). This means that, if there is no law establishing what sin is, a person has nothing to repent of and, further, no need for grace or forgiveness. Does that idea align with Scripture?

In Revelation 12:17, John writes, “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with [those] *who keep the commandments of God . . .*” (emphasis ours). If the law has been abolished, why does the dragon care about these people?

This verse suggests these commandment-keeping people have not been deceived by Satan's lie about the validity of God's law. So, if Jesus, Paul, and John all upheld God's law, should we not also? Without the unscriptural doctrine that obedience to God's law is no longer required, many modern "Christian" ministries would crumble. It is somewhat ironic that most of those ministries claim to "preach Jesus," yet Jesus' words and example clearly support the observance of God's law.

How Jesus Worshipped

We need to examine how Jesus worshipped. Worship weaves its way from Genesis to Revelation. Formal worship is not just about singing, attending church, or having an emotional experience. God is specific about the method, timing, and attitude He expects for formal worship that builds faith and honors Him.

Understanding Jesus' view of the law helps us understand worship because God's instructions for worship are built right into His laws. They are not just rules but a complete package that defines a way of life.

In Deuteronomy 12:29-30, God warns the Israelites not to imitate the worship practices of the nations they would be driving out, asking themselves, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." He says clearly in verse 31, "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way."

He goes on to describe these nations' worship as an abomination, full of lies and things He hates. Instead, God says in verse 32, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." God echoes this command in Jeremiah 10:2: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles." Their customs and manner of worship are superstitious, idolatrous, and futile.

In Mark 7:6-7, Jesus quotes Isaiah, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Jesus shows He agrees with Old Testament teachings about vain and ungodly worship, warning His disciples

against adopting man-made traditions of worship (such as those found in today's "Christian" holidays). He observed holy days—commanded by God in His Word—that many so-called Christian groups would not recognize. Do we have the discernment to recognize traditions that contradict God's way?

The New Testament shows Jesus observing the holy days listed in Leviticus 23. God describes them as "My feasts." They include the Passover and seven holy days. Paul instructs converted Jews and Gentiles in I Corinthians 5:6-8 to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see also Acts 18:21), and the book of Acts shows the church and Paul keeping the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2; 20:16).

We should not forget the Sabbath, the subject of the fourth commandment. Many passages in the gospels show that Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and that His followers continued to observe the same day (see Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; Hebrews 4:4, 9).

We can think of it this way: When a man and a woman fall in love, they learn what makes the other person feel loved. A man cannot just do what he prefers and expect his partner to feel loved. What would a woman think if her husband spent the day golfing, fishing, or watching football, then said, "See how much I love you. I gave you the whole day to yourself"? Most ladies would agree that love is not about leaving her alone to do her own thing, but about spending the whole day with her. Godly love is about doing what the other person values as a demonstration of one's love for him or her.

It is the same with God. We cannot just decide what we think shows love and expect Him to accept it. He has already told us what He values: obedience to His commandments and worship as He instructs. Notice what He tells His disciples the evening before His crucifixion:

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear

fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. (John 15:14-18)

Finally, we must consider the joyful experience of God's holy days. Completing the yearly cycle of God's feasts brings satisfaction and assurance, along with new knowledge of God's Plan for His creation.

In contrast, man-made holidays like Christmas often leave people with huge bills, family conflicts, and disappointed children. New Year's Day brings hangovers and broken resolutions, while Halloween dwells on demonism and abandoning self-control. These events offer no new understanding of God, His Plan, or wholesome living.

Yet, some argue that God's way of life is bondage, not realizing the cycle of bondage to destructive lifestyles these man-made events keep them in.

Jesus Fulfilled the Law

So, if Jesus walked into a church today, would He recognize their worship? He would find people calling themselves His followers yet worshipping Him on completely different days, following traditions that violate God's commands, in precisely the ways He taught against.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23:

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Lawlessness means breaking God's law, sinning as a way of life (I John 3:4). How, then, will Jesus recognize those He knows?

First, we must consider what Jesus meant when He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to

fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). This meaning of "fulfill" has sparked endless debate in attempts to support the claims of abolishing the requirements of the law. But instead of debating, we should let Jesus explain it Himself.

In Matthew 22:37-40, we get a definition from the lips of Jesus Himself about what fulfilling the law means:

Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Jesus teaches that love is the foundation or support of the law. God's law is not just a list of rules but a complete package that reflects God's character and teaches us how to live in harmony with Him and with each other.

Our Savior did not just talk about love—He lived it. In John 15:13-14, He says, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

That is powerful! Friendship with God is built on obedience to His commands. The apostle James reminds us that Abraham was called a friend of God because he believed and obeyed (James 2:23). Jesus fulfilled the law by demonstrating the ultimate love and obedience to the Father by sacrificing Himself in the place of His friends.

Can we see the connection? What fulfills the law is godly love, demonstrating that love toward God and our fellow man. Most Christian groups commonly teach that since Jesus demonstrated His love to His Father through obedience and love for His friends to the level of death, we are not required to demonstrate love toward God and fellow man through obedience to His standards of behavior. This viewpoint just does not square with the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is another example of man's attempt, through twisted reasoning, to force Scripture to conform to preconceived beliefs.

The apostle John puts it this way in I John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Keeping God's commandments affirms

that we love Him. Further, Paul confirms the need to keep the second great commandment in Galatians 5:14: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

So, back to the original question: When He returns, what will Jesus look for in a church that accepts Him as their Head? First, He will not be checking denominational labels such as Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, Baptist, or any others. The Son of God is not coming back to endorse a brand.

However, He will recognize those who are His friends, those He knows personally, those who have built a relationship with Him on His terms. And what are those terms?

- » Obedience to all His commandments
- » Worshipping the Father according to His instructions
- » A way of life rooted in love for God and for others

Jesus is a loving God, and He recognizes love, not by what *we* think it should look like, but by His people doing what He has commanded us through His Word and His example.

So, if we want to be part of the congregation He accepts when He returns, we need to follow His lead, not just by profession, but in deed.