

21T11 Secret Agent Christians

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me at the PUNLA Coffee Table. So, get your coffee or tea. Get comfortable and let's talk. If what I say is nonsense, then it's definitely from me. If anything I say brings you wisdom, then that's just God using me.

I've titled this series "Secret Agent Christians". I heard a pastor talking about "Secret Agent Christians" recently. He was talking about two groups of Christians; Disciples and Secret Agents. He described the "Secret Agent Christians, as Saved Christians but not disciples of Christ. Those who have done the minimum required for entry to heaven. This really confused me.

The term Christian literally means a follower of Christ. The term disciple means Follower. So Disciples of Christ and followers of Christ are the same Christian. The early Christians were also called followers of "The Way." So, can you be Christian or saved, and not actively following Christ? When did the term Christian get redefined? I had lots of questions.

So, the engineer in me wanted to understand the origin of this and was it possible to just be saved with no effort to be a follower of Christ or Disciple.

So, I thought I'd share my process with you.

First, I pray. I ask God to guide my process and bible verses and stories usually come into my mind. I read those first

Second, I use an internet search. I search for phrases, topics or words about my question. I read some commentaries but mostly I look for bible verses to cross-reference. Then I read and let God guide me.

So before we start please understand this is my process. My brain approaches things a little different than most. I am a researcher, so I search for answers. I do not try to find support for my preferred answer. That is an important distinction. Let's get started.

When I prayed for God to guide my process of understanding this concept of "Secret Agent" Christians. Immediately, I thought of the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23 (also in Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15) and I never knew you verses Matthew 7:21-23.

In the parable of the sower Jesus is teaching about 4 groups of people that hear the gospel message. Three of these groups receive the message or believe. Let's read it from Matthew in the NKJV

The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (NKJV). ¹On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. ²And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. ³Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, **a sower went out to sow.** ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and

choked them. ⁸But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

I often hear how difficult it is to understand the bible. Here we have a teaching of Jesus. And a few verses later He explains it clearly for all of us to understand.

Matthew 13:18-23 (NKJV) The Parable of the Sower Explained ¹⁸"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. ²⁰But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²²Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³But **he who received seed** on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, **who indeed bears fruit and produces:** some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Jesus makes it very clear that 3 of the 4 group received the gospel message. Group #1 is the seed on the path. Jesus makes it clear these are those you have no interest in the Kingdom or Jesus. God won't override their will, He will leave them to their delusion. Group #2, the stony places receive the gospel with joy. Today we would say, if you receive or believe the gospel message you are a Christian. But Jesus goes on to explain when troubles come they stumble or turn away from the faith because they have no root, no foundation to support them. But if asked, they would probably still say they are Christian. Group #3, in the weeds, hears and receives, meaning they profess to be Christian. But the cares of the world or things of the world are more important so they are unfruitful. Maybe they are saved, you be the judge. The final group, is the good soil. They are fruitful producing hundredfold, sixty or thirty. Jesus is clear, these Christians are all fruitful. May to different degrees but all produce fruit.

I logged this and turned my attention to the next scripture. Matthew 7:21-23 which is often referred to as the "I never knew you verses" Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV) ²¹*"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. ²² 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?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**'"*

This scripture is part of block of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. I would suggest reading Matthew 5-7 to get full context for these verses. Here Jesus is very clearly stating that not everyone who claims to be Christian will be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. So people can think they are saved, Christian and not be.

These two scriptures seem to indicate that Secret Agent Christians may be true but the question really is are they saved. I remembered two stories I once heard from Bill Weiss. In one story, if I live in a remote spot and I give you directions to my house, then you say no you know better way. What are the chances you will get to my house? No chance, right.

The second story was more of a question. Pick a celebrity, anyone. Actor, athlete, wealthy person, anyone. Go to their house and knock on their door. Tell them you are moving in with them. Just because

you know about of them and you are a good person. Do you think they would let you move in. Probably not. So why do we think Jesus will let us in, if we don't have a relationship with Him.

The moral is He, Jesus, knows the way to His house. And He will only let in those who He knows and has a relationship with.

The next thing I did was to clearly define our two categories. A Disciple is actively following Christ. Follow is an action word, so disciples have to be doing actions for Christ. "Secret Agents" are Christian in name only with little or no action to back it up. No fruit to show as evidence of their commitment to Christ.

I decided to see what the Bible says. Does the bible have two classes of Christians? I set out to research Disciples first. I did an internet search for "disciple in the bible." As with every internet search you have to discern the information. Here is the search results I got. I have marked the ones I choose to use.

Next I searched "Salvation in the Bible. Here is the search results I got. Again I have marked the ones I choose to use.

My reasons are I'm familiar with the sources. If it is a new source, I do a little research about who they are, other beliefs they profess. You must do this to make sure they are reliable sources. Here are a few I used for this research but again I test every source even those I know well.

- a) www.biblestudytools.com.
- b) www.openbible.info
- c) biblehub.com
- d) bible.org
- e) abideandseek.com
- f) www.crossway.org
- g) dailyverses.net
- h) bible.org

So I look at each source for bible references only. I do not read the commentaries at this point. I make a list of scripture from these sources to review. Here is my list of scriptures to understand what a Disciple is and Salvation, I already screened out the calling of the apostles. And I concentrate on the gospels first.

DISCIPLE	SALVATION
John 21:17 Feed my sheep	John 3:16-18 God so loved the world
John 15:18-19 World will hate you	John 5:24 everlasting life
John 8:12 Never walk in darkness	1 John 5:13; The Certainty of God's Witness
John 12:26 Must Follow Me	1 John 2:3-6 test of knowing Christ (disciples)
John 15:1-27 True Vine	Mark 16:16 He who believes will be saved
Matthew 28:19-20 Great Commission (Mark 16:15)	Acts 16:30-31 Philippian Jailer Saved
Great Commission	Ephesians 2:8-9 salvation by grace not works
Matthew 4:19 Fisher of men	Romans 10:9-10 How are you saved
Matt 25:1-13 Bridesmaids parable	Romans 1:16 The Just Live by Faith
Luke 13: 24-27	Titus 3:4-8 Graces of the Heirs of Grace
Acts 1:8 Witnesses for Christ Everyone everywhere	
James 2:14-26 faith without works is dead	

So I selected 11 verses for each Disciple and Salvation. There are many others but I found these the most compelling. Then I just start reading. Remember the rules of bible study. Who, What, When and Why. Understand Who wrote it and who it was written to, What was the culture, what was happening, when was it written, Why was it written (purpose). I prefer to always start with the words of Jesus and then work for there.

So let's look at the gospel of John first. Probably the most famous and well know scripture. John 3:16. Let's read.

John 3:16-21 (NKJV), *16For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.*

So Jesus says “whoever believes is saved” but then follows it up with “he who does”, “that his deeds”, “have been done in God”. So, salvation only or salvation leading to deeds.?

John 5:24 (NKJV), *24Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

This is more support for Believing equals everlasting life. No mentions of works.

John 8:12 (NKJV), *12Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. **He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**”*

He who follows Me. Follow is an action word which requires something to be evident.

John 12:23-26 (NKJV), *23But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*

follow Me, serves Me. If we love our life we lose it, if we hate life in this world we gain eternal life. Hate is used by Jesus to say we comparatively value. Love is high value, Hate is not valued in comparison. We value eternal life above this world.

John 15:1-8 (NKJV), *1“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they*

gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Now this is very graphic. If you abide in Christ, you bear fruit. If you don't bear fruit, you are cast out or in other translations cut off. Bearing fruit is essential to staying in a relationship with Christ according to Jesus. I don't think the branches that are cut off are getting into heaven after they are burned.

John 21:15-17 (NKJV), *¹⁵So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." ¹⁶He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.*

Jesus is calling Peter but also us, to take care of His people. This requires actions to do this commandment. Jesus says very plainly, "if you love me, you will take care of His sheep"

Next, I want to look at 1st John next just because we have been reading John's gospel. I want to stay with the same author.

1John 2:3-6 (NKJV), *³Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

John expands on the theme from the gospel of John. We must keep His commandments or we don't know Jesus. We must walk as he walked or we don't know Jesus

1John 5:9-13 (NKJV), *⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

John reminds us that if we believe we have eternal life. But again I have to keep this scripture in context with Chapter 2 which tells me we must keep Jesus commandments if we are true believers.

Let's move to the Gospel of Mark. Mark 16:15-18, *¹⁵And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

This is the Great Commission in Mark. This is a call to action but it also says “he who believes is saved. Let’s look closer at the Great Commission in the gospel of Matthew

Matthew 28:19-20, *19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

The Great Commission is a call to action. but it hear in Matthew it is stress to “teaching them to observe all things that I have command you” This seems like action is required of the new disciples.

Matthew 25:1-13 the bridesmaid parable, *1“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6“And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ 7Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 10And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

If you are not familiar with the traditions of the Galilean Wedding, I suggest you take some time and learn. Jesus uses many images from the traditional Galilean wedding in His teaching. You will be surprised what knowing this cultural traditional will do for your understanding of the bible. There are many resources but I really like the documentary “before the wrath”. I’ll include a link below this message. The ten virgins or bridesmaids are metaphors for the church the bride of Christ. They are invited to the marriage ceremony but only five have done the work necessary to be prepared for the day of the marriage. Jesus says to the others, “I do not know you”. Seems harsh but it is a close parallel to the vine dresser parable.

Luke 13:24-27, *“And He said to them, 24“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many. I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ 26then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ 27But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’*

Here in Luke Jesus is talking about relationship again. A relationship with God is specific or “narrow gate”. Many want to enter but only those who have a relationship with the savior will be allowed. Jesus’ says he will answer “I do not know you”. So, according to Jesus its more than just believing.

Next let’s look at Acts for the words of Jesus Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Jesus is telling his disciples, he is telling us to go and be witnesses for him to everyone everywhere. Even those that hate us. Action is needed from His followers, if they are to do His commands.

Acts 16:29-31 the Philippian Jailer. *²⁹Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

Unfortunately we don't have much detail of Paul conversation with the Philippian Jailer. But Paul says believe and be saved. We need to remember Paul was a great evangelist.

Paul goes further in Ephesians 2:8-10 *⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Paul is clear we are saved through faith and it is a gift of God. Nothing we can do can earn it. But he follows up with the statement we are created for good works which God has prepared for us to do. If we are followers.

Romans 1:16-17 *¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”*

Salvation to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:9-10 *⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

Declare with your month, believe in your heart. It's easy to see where the reader could stop just with what these verses say. Let's read on in Titus.

Titus 3:4-8 *⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*

Here is Titus, Paul again reinforces “not by works” and I agree you cannot earn your way to heaven it is a gift of the grace of God toward His followers. But Paul also says in the same sentence “not by works of righteousness which we have done. Which we have done. So as followers we do works of righteousness, not to earn our way into heaven but because we are followers of Christ.

Last let's look at James. James 2:14-26 *¹⁴What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things*

which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ²⁵Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James is pretty clear about his opinion. Works don't aid your salvation. There are merely reflections of who you love. If you truly love Christ, it should be evident in your actions, your works.

During my research another scripture came to mind from Hebrews. Hebrews 6:4-6 *4For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. ⁷For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

If you are a Christian these verses in Hebrews should make you shudder. The author says. “once enlightened” that's a believer, a Christian. Then, “if they fall away”, this is a believer walking away from the faith. They “bear thorns and briers”, are cursed and burned. So much for once saved always saved. So after believing, and tasting the goodness of God we are required to follow Him, take up our cross daily (Matthew 16:24-26) and do the works He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Now the rest of this is just going to be my opinion. I'll use a quote from Douglas Gresham the stepson of C.S. Lewis “If it be wisdom it's from God, if it be folly it's from me.” So take it for what it's worth.

I fear that the doctrine of “salvation only” is giving people a false idea that getting a ticket to heaven is the objective of a Christian life. I believe salvation is not the objective but the fringe benefit or gift.

I am a Christian, a follower Christ, a disciple of Jesus. My objective is to grow my relationship with Jesus every day. Live in the Kingdom of God right now, every day. And I strive every day to be more and more like Jesus. That's what a disciple does. That includes the Great Commission in Matthew 28. It includes being His witnesses to everyone everywhere in Acts 1. It includes doing the works He has prepared for us to do as His Follower in Ephesians 2.

Salvation and heaven are the gift (Ephesians 2:8) that followers of Christ get for being followers. We are grafted into the family of God (Romans 11), and as sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6) we get to live with our Father. We are the bride of Christ. Jesus will come and take His bride to live with Him forever in His Father's House.

If it was only necessary to believe in Jesus to have everlasting life, then what about the devil and his fallen angels. They believe in God, but still are condemned to eternal death in the lake of fire.

It has to be more than just believing. I think if we consider all the scriptures, they require us to “follow”. As we follow our relationship with Christ grows.

If you look at all the scriptures we read. Then interrupt them all as one story together, the only conclusion is discipleship is the objective and salvation is the gift for those disciples. Paul was not just focused on salvation. He was talking to Christians in His letters. They were already Followers. So, it is justifiable to concentrate on the gift of Salvation to encourage the Christian, the Followers, The disciples of Christ to persist through their troubles, trials and tribulations.

We should not try to separate the two or suggest these are opposing views or two different gospels. There is only one gospel of Jesus. We should pay close attention to how Jesus defined the gospel and then interrupt our scriptures consistently and confidently using all the words of Jesus and all the words in the other books of the bible. One consistent message.

I'll leave you with these thoughts. A Christian is a follower of Christ. Follow is an action word. We are saved by grace. I believe our objective as a Christian is to Follow Christ, be His witnesses, go, make and teach new disciples, become more and more like the one we love. Jesus gives a free gift to His followers, which is salvation and eternal life with Him. So you be the judge, can there really be “Secret Agent Christians”??

Let me close with a prayer.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your word, the bible. I'm so thankful that a broken sinner like myself can read your words. I pray that the listener consider the big picture you paint with all the words of the bible, not just a single brush stroke.

I pray these things in your name Jesus. Amen

Thank you for joining me at the PUNLA Coffee Table. If you liked the message, please click like. And Please Subscribe to our channel. Leave comments here, or our website or email me. I want your feedback so let me know what you think.

Until next time at the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.

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