

THE CHRIST EXPERIMENT

EXPERIMENT NO. 1 - LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Observation and Background

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a man appeared on earth who came to be known as Jesus of Nazareth. There had been many teachers and wise men on the earth ever since mankind made its appearance on the planet. Many different religions, creeds, and ideologies sprang up giving birth to their own prophets, instructors and ‘saviors.’ But this one man, Jesus of Nazareth, was uniquely different.

Jesus was identified by his followers not merely as a prophet or a teacher, but as ‘the word of God’ (*John 1:1*) the begotten Son of God (*1 John 4:9*), ‘the firstborn of all creation’ (*Colossians 1:15*), he whose life force had been transferred into the body of a woman on earth and who existed and experienced life as a son of mankind. (*John 1:14*) Jesus is said to be the one whom God used to create everything and everyone in our universe, no matter what race, nationality, religion, creed or ideology. (*John 1:3; Colossians 1:16*) And during his ministry, Jesus identified himself as “the way, the truth and the life” – the only means of personality survival after the death of the mortal body. (*John 14:6*) No other teacher, prophet or wise man has ever made such claims. Thus, every religion, every creed, every ideology is beholden to Jesus whether they know it, admit it, recognize it or not. That is why Jesus is called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (*Isaiah 9:6*)

Not only was Jesus different, but his message was different. At that time, the Jews were in a terrible bondage to ritualism and legalism that invaded every domain of personal and social life. Although having been born and raised as a Jew, Jesus taught that the entire Jewish religious system had completed its purpose and, with his arrival, had come to an end. (*Matthew 5:17*) The experiment of group salvation instituted by Moses had become perverted and failed to reach its goals. (*Hebrews 10:14*) In its place, Jesus introduced individual salvation – a revolutionary way of thinking, believing, and behaving that would apply not only to his own people, the Jews, but to all of mankind to the ends of the earth. (*Matthew 28:19*)

As the Great Liberator, Jesus restored man’s personal dignity by teaching that all men are sons of God and brothers to each other. (*Matthew 23:8-9*) He taught that we are all individually the lights of the world (*Matthew 5:14-16*), not just a few elite priests or leaders. He lifted the status of women and slaves, and taught that all are on equal standing before God. (*Galatians 3:28*) He honored the children as equal heirs of the heavenly kingdom. (*Matthew 19:14*) He was the epitome of universal fairness for all sorts of men and he taught his followers to exhibit the same type of fairness. (*Luke 6:31; John 8:7*) He sent the Spirit of Truth into the world so that man could recognize and discern the truth about their origin, their history and their destiny. (*John 16:13*) He taught that this life is only the beginning of an eternal adventure extending beyond the confines of earth out into the limitless universe where he had specifically prepared places for us. (*John 14:2-3; Matthew 25:34*) And he brought freedom – freedom of thought, freedom of spirit, freedom of expression, freedom from enslaving traditions and doctrines – the freedom of the children of God! (*John 1:12; Romans 8:21*)

Jesus declared that from his time on, mankind had entered into a spiritual Jubilee, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah, where those who had been deprived of spiritual light would know truth; those who were held captive to enslaving traditions and doctrines were set free; those who were blinded to truth would begin to open their eyes and see it; those who had been mistreated in their pursuit of truth would be comforted. (*Luke 4:18-21*) And he taught that if the message of the Jubilee were spread to the most distant parts of the earth, then sorrow, suffering, inequality and injustice of all kinds will come to an end. (*Matthew 24:14*)

The 1st century followers of Jesus accepted this ambitious yet challenging endeavor of spreading his teachings of liberty and freedom throughout the known world at great cost to themselves. But within 300 years, Jesus' revolutionary message was subverted, subdued and nearly extinguished. In its place there arose various perverted forms of his message, most of them designed to control, dominate and extinguish our individual 'light,' and return mankind to the bondage of authoritative religion and enslaving traditions from which Jesus had painstakingly freed us.

The well-intentioned, though perverted, form of the teachings of Jesus came to be known as Christianity. It was a religion ABOUT Jesus, but it was not the religion Jesus practiced. Rather than teaching new disciples to live AS Jesus lived, and to worship the Father AS Jesus worshiped the Father, they taught their disciples to look at Jesus, to be in awe of Jesus, even to worship the image of Jesus. Even though 'all authority in heaven and on earth' had been given to Jesus after his resurrection (*Matthew 28:18*), his followers fell back into viewing themselves as sinners in a darkened demon-controlled world where one could only gain God's favor and protection by submitting again to the authority of priests for group salvation. These newly minted priests, and their successors, created so much 'red tape' and 'theocratic hoops' to jump through that a personal relationship with the Father was practically inaccessible to most of their adherents.

Christianity, as a whole, forgot that they are ALL faith children of God, a commissioned people with a ministry to serve one another and help all mankind become reconciled to God. (*2 Corinthians 5:18-20*) Instead of being a liberator, transforming its disciples to a peace-loving, God-oriented brotherhood in celebration of their spiritual freedom, Christianity became the oppressor of all who adhered to it and the vicious opposer of all who declined to submit. Even within, Christianity became divided against itself into thousands of splinter groups to the point where the pure teachings of Jesus were hardly recognizable. And though much of Christianity's intolerance of other religions has mellowed significantly in the last few centuries, the perverted air of superiority and 'chosen people' mentality persists. They continue, for the most part, concerned only with salvation for their own private sect, while they clamor for the destruction of all others. They prefer to preach messages of doom and gloom rather than proclaiming Jesus' message of liberty and spiritual freedom for all. Their return to group salvation was again perverted. It is no wonder that the youth and the non-Christian world resists Christianity. They have not yet seen the authentic Christ, nor heard his authentic message of personal dignity, individual liberty, and victorious salvation!

Yet, in spite of its deviation from the religion OF Jesus, Christianity did preserve enough of his teachings to allow thinking men and women of a more spiritual age to sift through the layers of dogma and doctrine, and find the pure teachings once again. Jesus' unique religion has been slumbering for centuries, but perhaps in this 21st century, Christians have developed enough courage, enough curiosity, and enough will to attempt to discover the true teachings,

achieve a true unified self-governing brotherhood, and reclaim their God-given Christ-won Jubilee of spiritual freedom.

The Hypothesis and Prediction

Based on the above, and the fact that the authentic message and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth survived less than 300 years, we wondered what would happen if there was a return to his authentic message and ministry. What would happen if all Christians put away their slave mentality and stood up as faith children of God? What if Christianity abandoned the superfluous manmade doctrines, dogma, rituals and superstitions that have perverted, engulfed and submerged the authentic teachings of Jesus, and promoted the pure religion OF Jesus? We hypothesize that it would usher in an era of enlightenment that has heretofore never been seen or experienced on our planet. We predict that it would unite the various sects of Christianity and attract the positive interest and attention of our youth, the non-Christian world, the great thinkers and scientists of our day, as well as self-proclaimed atheists and agnostics. Maybe not all, but certainly the vast majority of mankind.

The Experiment

In light of the above, we ask our readers to share your thoughts about the above Observation and Hypothesis by responding to questions such as:

1. Did we get it wrong? Is our observation incorrect? If so, what part?
2. Do you see Jesus the way we describe him? If not, how do you see him?
3. Do you believe 21st century Christianity is practicing the religion Jesus practiced?
4. In your opinion, what changes, if any, are needed in the world of Christianity?
5. What do you think would be Jesus' opinion of a 21st century church, congregation, temple or cathedral?