



Post-Christian or Pagan?

By

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Post-Christian

We often hear the term “post-Christian” being used for our society, but what does that mean? The word “post” in this context means *after*, but how can our society be “after-Christian” when millions of Christians continue to live in our society?

The term, *post-Christian*, is often used for societies that were once predominately Christian but the majority of people living in that society reject the authority of Christianity. Some think of the society or culture changing from majority Christian to more secular.

Here are two definitions to consider:

following the decline of Christianity as a majority religion.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

A person living in a nominally Christian society who has turned away from the Christian faith or has been brought up without reference to it. Oxford English Dictionary

I think the word “nominally” is important to consider. Based on what we read in the Bible, a society that is “nominally” Christian is not really Christian at all. More about that in a few minutes.

Barna Research developed a metric several years ago to determine whether someone is “post-Christian.” They used the metric to determine the [most post-Christian cities](#) in the United States. You might want to look at their metric and see if you agree with them.

Here’s another interesting view of “post-Christianity” —

The term post-Christian has no universally accepted definition, though it is often applied to modern Western cultures. In that use, a post-Christian society is historically based in Christian ideas and follows simplified Christian values, but rejects the authority of Christianity and does not consider it the basis of either its ethics or its culture. The Christian language and expression that once permeated society become rare or superficial in a post-Christian society. In contrast to other cultures that are

explicitly anti-Christian or grounded in a different religion, such as Islam, a post-Christian society selectively claims virtues rooted in a Christian worldview, while selectively rejecting the truths that make those values possible.

What does it mean for a society to be post-Christian?

The Post-Christian Era

When did the so-called “Post-Christian Era” begin? Many people connect the Christian *era* with the “Western” world, so they look to a decline of Christianity in Europe as a barometer of when the “post” Christian Era began. Is that true?

Christianity began in the early part of the 1st century AD in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is located in Israel, which is in the Middle East. The Apostle Paul introduced Christianity to a much larger part of the Roman Empire in the middle of the 1st century AD that included the Middle East, Asia Minor, and what later became known as Europe. Other apostles of Christ took the Gospel to the Middle East, Africa, India, and other parts of the world.

Christian history began with the birth of Jesus Christ, but we usually think of Christianity starting with His death and resurrection. If we use 30 AD as the date for those events, we’re less than eight years away from celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of the beginning of Christianity. The history of

Christianity is filled with many changes, which means the world has known many different types of Christian *eras*.

The Roman Empire persecuted Christians for more than 200 years before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century AD. Each one could be called a Christian *era* because of the differences between persecution and acceptance. The Roman Empire finally fell toward the end of the 5th century AD. It had been collapsing for a long time, but Christianity continued to grow in both the West and East. However, something happened at the beginning of the 7th century AD that would impact Christianity for centuries.

Islam began about 610 AD in Arabia and expanded quickly into the West and East. It became a dominant power and changed the culture of many countries. Might we call some of that time *Post-Christian*? Christianity was no longer the dominant religious influence in many areas of the world, so the term might fit.

I share that to help us remember that Christians living today are not unique in the history of Christianity. The Church has continued to grow and bring glory to God during many eras of opposition. We can look to the history of the world and the history of Christianity in the world as a reminder that God is in control. Just because people call the time in which we live Post-Christian does not mean Jesus Christ is not building His Church.

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

The Impact of Nominal Christianity

The word “nominal” means:

(of a role or status) existing in name only. Oxford Languages

existing or being something in name or form only. Merriam-Webster

in name or thought but not in fact or not as things really are. Cambridge Dictionary

I believe that describes much of Christianity in the Western world for at least the last century. I found the term being used in the 1930s and 40s. The words “Post-Christian” were used by several leaders at the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. They talked about living in a “post-Christian age” where the Church was nearing its decline. Many church leaders and theologians were concerned about anti-Christian movements in Europe.

[Pew Research](#) has shown that the number of people identifying as Christians in Europe fell from 66% in 1910 to 25% in 2010. The number in 2050 is expected to fall to 15%. The decline in church attendance has also impacted the United States. [Gallup Research](#) shows that religious attendance fell from 73% in 1937 to just 46% in 2020. That includes churches, synagogues, and mosques. The decline is expected to continue as younger generations express less interest in religion than older generations. [Barna Research](#) is even more revealing as it shows that just 25% of Christians

identify as “practicing.” 43% of *Christians* identify as “non-practicing. That’s certainly one indication that the majority of “Christians” are nominal. What does that tell us?

I was an atheist until 1971, so my perspective on nominal Christianity begins there. I was excited to have learned the truth about Jesus Christ and spent most of my time with Christians who were also excited about their faith. However, it didn’t take long before I realized a lot of “church” people were not excited about being Christians. That was hard for me to understand at the time – until I learned about so-called *nominal Christians*. They had little interest in church attendance, Bible study, prayer, living holy lives, and sharing the Gospel with unbelievers. Might that be because they were unbelievers themselves?

Christianity is not how a person identifies themselves, but how God identifies them. Based on what we read in the Gospels, Acts, and the apostolic letters, it would seem that millions of people who self-identify as Christian are in fact not Christians. That may sound harsh, but I speak the truth in love. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Pretending that someone is

not lost when they are is not showing them love. Tell your friends and family the truth about Christian salvation and discipleship. Tell them in a way that they know you love and care for them.

I've written many times through the years about the impact of *nominal Christians* on Christianity in the United States. We're seeing a smaller percentage of people attend church services every year, but does that mean Jesus is failing at building His Church? Not at all. Look at what He said to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3 and you'll see what Jesus thinks about nominal Christianity. Five of the seven churches were failing in some or many of the basics of following Jesus Christ. Only two of the churches, the two that were suffering persecution, received blessings and promises from the Lord.

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 3:10

I find it interesting that the areas of the world where Christianity is seeing numerical growth is in countries where Christians are persecuted for their faith. God blesses those who follow Him faithfully.

The Rise of Neo-Paganism

We could call what we're seeing around us a "post-Christian culture," but I think it's more than that. I view it as a rise of historical paganism that we could call *Neo-paganism*. Christians are living right in the middle of the expansion of this Neo-paganism and don't even seem aware of what's happening around them. We see that in what Jesus said to other churches in Revelation:

But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Revelation 2:14-16

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Revelation 2:20-23

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:1-3

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Revelation 3:15-19

It's important that we read the Lord's words in the context of the time and location. All seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3 were located in Asia Minor. Jesus dictated the words to the Apostle John toward the end of the 1st century AD. Christians were living their lives in a pagan culture. By "pagan," I mean that they worshipped idols and false gods. The worship of idols at that time often included sexual orgies and drunkenness. Paganism was polytheistic (many gods) in

much of the Roman Empire. Idol worship focused on people creating their own gods rather than God creating people. It's no wonder that the Apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Corinth to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14) and "sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Christians today should recognize that millions of people are heavily involved in sexual immorality, corruption, and violence in our current culture. It's a reminder of the days of Noah and the 1st century AD.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord ... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt;

for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. Genesis 6:5-8, 11-12

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to

parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:24-32

Neo-paganism is viewed as “a modern religious movement which seeks to incorporate beliefs or ritual practices from traditions outside the main world religions, especially those of pre-Christian Europe and North America” (Oxford Languages). However, many people in the Western world would never think of themselves as pagans. That’s because they don’t understand the roots of paganism.

We find the roots in the early chapters of Genesis, which is one of the reasons many scholars (including some Christian scholars) have attacked the literal reading of Genesis chapters 1 – 11. Removing those chapters as “literal” deletes some of the history of pagan practices (e.g. Tower of Babel pagan worship). We learn many things about ancient paganism in the later chapters of Genesis as Abraham, Isaac,

Jacob, and his sons came into contact with people living in Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt.

God called His people (Israel) to separate themselves from the idolatry of the non-Jews living around them. However, as we read through the Old Testament, God's people often fell into idol worship (ancient paganism). That led to many prophecies concerning Israel and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of God's people. Israel learned their lesson (to a point) and discontinued their involvement in idol worship and paganism. Jews and Christians were the two primary monotheistic religions in the 1st century.

Conclusion

Whether we use the terms Post-Christian or Neo-Pagan, things are changing rapidly in our culture – and not for the better. Christians need to come to terms with the fact that they are in the minority and that status will grow during the coming years.

Naturalism is supplanting Supernaturalism in the thinking of a majority of people in the Western world, including North America. People see themselves as their own gods. They do whatever they want with little thought about how their behavior affects others. They deny the God who created them. Their hatred for Christianity grows continually. They hate what we think, what we say, what we believe. They hate our Lord and Savior. Jesus told us it would happen.

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:18-19

Their personal focus is on themselves and their own enjoyment. They care more about things than they do about others. “Stuff” is their idol. They may not bow down and “worship” their possessions, but we know what someone worships by how they spend their time and money.

What can Christians do about it?

We stay true to our calling. We stay true to the path Jesus Christ has set for us to follow. Remember His call to discipleship? “Follow me.” We follow Christ wherever He leads.

We also must emphasize holy living and the glory of God in our daily living. You will find some recommended reading at the end of this article that will help you focus on what God wants each one of us to do in a culture that is growing darker by the day. Here are a few portions of Scripture that will help us with that focus. My prayers are with you as you love and serve the Most High God.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:8-16

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:1-5

Recommended Reading

[Making Sense Of Our Current Culture](#)

[Leaving The Faith – Really?](#)

[Exvangelical – What’s That?](#)

[The Church’s Biggest Problem\(s\)](#)

[Warning and Lament: The Collapse of Civilizations](#)

[Preparing For The Coming Persecution](#)

[Preparing for the Harvest](#)

[Living Christian In ‘This Present World’](#)

[On The Winning Side](#)

[The Best Way to Live Your Life](#)

The 5 'Knows' for Spiritual Warfare

Thinking About What God Wants

Where He Sends I Will Go

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