

12. OUTSIDE THE CINEMA, INSIDE CHRISTIANITY?

First thing some mornings I meet a group of friends at Burri cinema. As far as I know, none of us has ever been into it. We know where it is. We tell others how to get there. We assemble on the open ground outside, which is also used as a car park by battered yellow taxis. While there we can look at posters advertising which movie is 'now showing' or 'coming soon'. But I don't think anyone of us has ever been inside to watch a film.

My friends and I treat that cinema as some people treat Christianity. We meet outside it. In all our arrangements it is central. But as soon as we have met there, and we've sorted who is going in which car, off we go for a bird watching expedition around the Sillette, or Gereif East Blue Nile or the Umm Dom stream. We leave the cinema far behind while we do what we want to do with our own lives.

Some people abuse church or Christianity like that. They talk about Christianity, using the right-sounding words. They meet others by church buildings. They are aware of all the programmes that happen. But they never actually take part in real Christianity. They use the church, or the name 'Christian', for their own agenda.

Real Christianity is only for those who are committed to following Jesus Christ with every part of their lives. Jesus lived, from his Christmas cradle to his pre-Easter cross, totally conscious of the personal cost he was paying to honour God with 100% of his life. He accepted being persecuted without complaint. He did not answer false charges made against him. He always displayed truthfulness in speech. He was integrity in action. He spontaneously showed concerned love for other people. He followed up completely on his Father's plan .

As this old year ends and a new one begins, check up on yourself as I do on myself. Though you say you are a Christian, are you inside or outside of real Christianity? Do you follow your own agenda or the written will of Jesus Christ? Do you use the church for your own purposes or for God's? Do you call people to honour every word Jesus said, or just the selected few which suit your theme?

Real disciples of Jesus Christ are lights that burn brightly outside in the darkness, because inside his holiness sets them on fire.