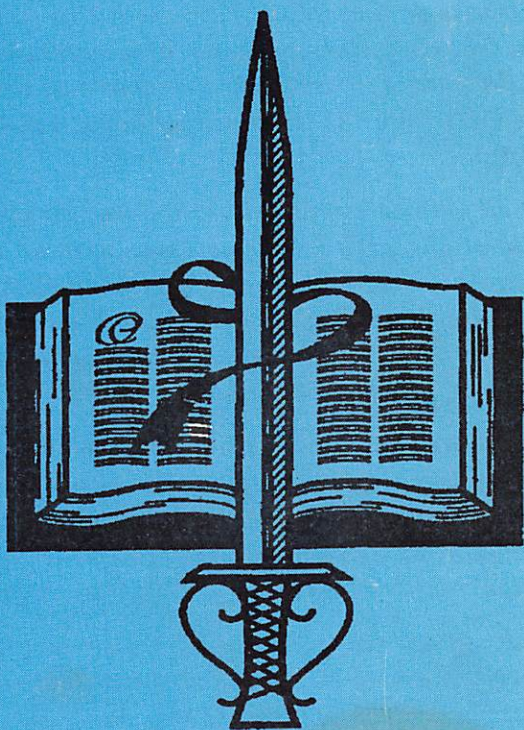


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The Bible Teacher



OUR PLEA

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. *That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).*
2. *That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).*
3. *That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.*
4. *That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).*
5. *Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).*

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

Salvation Is By Grace, Not By Works

No man can ever perform enough 'good deeds' to place God in debt. No amount of offerings or worships or works of our own righteousness can save us from our sins. Yet, the Bible declares, "All have sinned." (Romans 3:23). God who had created man in the beginning, had created him in His own likeness, a free moral being, holy and without sin, (Genesis 1:26,27). But every individual is in sin by his or her own choice (James 1:14, 15). All therefore are in need of salvation from sin. One not saved from sin, before departing from this earth to live in eternity, is in danger of entering hell, the lake of fire and brimstone. (Mark 9:43-48). One cannot save himself from sins. All therefore need God, who is able to save man from sin. The Bible teaches, God saves every person by His grace.

Concerning the saving Grace of God we read: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works," (Titus 2:11-14).

What is grace? King David, the Bible says, was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). But he was not perfect, as none is. We read in chapter 12 of the book of 2 Samuel, that he had committed a great sin, worthy of death, under the law he lived. Yet when he had genuinely confessed his sin before the

Lord, he was instantly forgiven. In other words, because of his penitent heart, he got what he needed, and not what he actually deserved. This is grace. Getting what is needed and not what one deserves.

In Romans 6:23 we read, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Sin has separated all people, all accountable people, from Gōd, bŭt God's grace has appeared to all men. Because of sin all people were destined to go and live in hell. But God because of His love for us gave us something that we all need, and not what we all deserve.

The grace of God has provided the means of salvation from sin for all mankind who want to be saved from their sins by His grace. The Bible teaches that God is not willing or that it is not what he desires that any should perish in hell, but that all should have eternal life in heaven with Him. (2 Peter 3:9). And, look, what God has done to provide man the salvation he need: God, reads John 3:16, gave His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole humanity. God made Jesus Christ the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10). While we all deserve to die because of our sins, in sin, He died for our sins; or instead of us (Romans 5:8). 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." "Jesus," says Hebrews 2:9, "by the grace of God, tasted death for everyone."

Yet, God is not forcing His free offer of salvation on any man. He is not saving people by force or by inducement. Jesus Christ, by the grace of God had died on the cross to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but whole world will not be saved, just because Christ had died on the cross for the world. To be saved from sins, the Bible teaches, everyone must believe in Jesus Christ, and repent, that is, leave everything that is wrong and is not according to God's will, and be baptized (buried in the grave of water, by the authority of Christ for remission of sins). Remember, Christ promised to save those who would believe in Him and would be baptized. (Mark 16:15, 16); in other words, to be saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ one must believe in Him and obey His command. Also read: Acts 2:37,38; Acts 8:35-39.

But this is not all, the grace of God that saves us teaches us, to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. The inference is, since one has been baptized into the death of Christ, one has been raised to walk in the newness of life, as we learn reading from Romans

6:3-6. Before obeying the gospel of salvation one was a servant of sin, but now has become a servant of righteousness. (Romans 6:17, 18). After obeying the gospel one should not be conformed to the world, but must be transformed by the renewing of mind. (Romans 12:1, 2). The follower of Christ, the Christian, need to set his mind on the things of heaven and not on the things of this world. (Colossians 3:1,2).

Thank God for His saving grace that has appeared to all men. Salvation from sin is a gift of God. God has made it available in Christ for all people. Those who accept His grace by faith and obedience have the promise of His salvation and the hope of entrance into heaven to live with Him eternally.

New Testament Worship

Lesson Nine

PRAYER

J.C. CHOATE

Another act of New Testament worship is that of prayer. When the early Christians assembled for worship this was one of the things they engaged in. Right after the church had been established, the record says, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). Notice, "and in prayers", indicating the emphasis that was placed upon this part of the worship.

The word prayer means intercession, mediation, supplication, or simply that of speaking or talking to the Lord. It is not only to be a part of our worship service, but it is also to be a part of our daily life. Paul writes, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Ephesians 6: 18). Again he says, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5: 17). This simply means that one should always have the spirit of prayer.

As we consider this all important subject, then let us list some major points:

1. Prayer is in the main reserved for Christians or children of God.—This does not mean that a non-Christian cannot pray, should not pray, but the scriptures make it clear that prayer is a privilege and blessing that belongs to the Christian. We read, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a

worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." (John 9: 31). Now observe the conditions stated in order for the Lord to hear one's prayer—he must be a worshipper of God and one who is a doer of the Lord's will. Who is this? A Christian, of course. Besides, for what could a sinner pray? He couldn't pray that the Lord might forgive him of his sins because Christ said that one must believe and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:16). He couldn't pray for faith because the scriptures have been given to produce that. (John 20:30,31; Romans 10:17). Neither could he pray for something else as a sinner.

As we turn through the New Testament and read the many passages of scripture that deal with prayer then we will observe that they all are directed to the Christian. The Christian is God's child as a result of obedience (Galatians 3:26, 27), and therefore may rightfully call upon God as his Father. (Romans 8: 15). If everyone had access to the Father through prayer, including both sinner and saint, then what advantage would the Christian have over the sinner? So you can surely see that the Christian has the distinct privilege of prayer and this is one of the spiritual blessings of being a Christian. (Ephesians 1:3).

We have the widespread practice today of the sinner praying for the forgiveness of his sins and thereby becoming a Christian. However, this is not supported by the word of God but is merely the teaching of men.

2. Our prayers are to be directed to God through Jesus Christ.—God is the Father and he is the giver of all blessings. It is only right that we should call upon him for help as well as to thank him for the blessings he has already bestowed upon us. However, we cannot go to God directly inasmuch as sin has come between us. On the other hand, that does not mean that we must look to some man, regardless of his status in life, to intercede for us. Instead, Jesus is our reconciliator, our mediator, our advocate, through whom we are to approach the throne of grace. Listen to God's word: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2: 1,2). Again, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5). Therefore we should always pray in the name of, or by the authority of, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28: 18).

3. We should pray in spirit and in truth.—We have noticed in previous lessons that the Lord has said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24). Since prayer is a part of worship, and the daily Christian life, then our prayers must be in spirit and in truth. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. (1 Corinthians 14: 14, 15). That means then that our prayers must be with the understanding, that our minds must be on what we are saying, and that we are to be humble and sincere in them. Furthermore, our prayers must be in harmony with the scriptures. That is, we are not to ask the Lord to do that which would be opposed to his will. Christ said on one occasion, when some of his disciples had made a foolish request. "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matthew 20:22). Again he said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matthew 4: 7).

This is one reason why we cannot use what is called the "Lord's Prayer." (Matthew 6:9-13). It would not be in harmony with the Lord's will for us to pray for the kingdom to come inasmuch as it has already come. (Hebrews 12:28).

4. The contents of our prayers are clearly set forth in the scriptures.—We should pray prayers of thanksgiving. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6).

We should pray in time of need. "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." (Acts 12: 5).

We should pray for the leaders of the country. (Romans 13).

We should pray for one another. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5: 16).

And on and on we could go listing the many verses of scripture that speak of the various things and individuals that we should pray for. This would include the church, our families, the lost, and so on.

5. The scriptures also give some warnings on prayer

Christ says, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (Matthew 6:5-8). Again, he warns, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6: 14, 15).

So in conclusion, prayer is a big subject whether we consider it as a part of our worship services or in everyday life. But as Christians we have the privilege to call upon God in both instances. Not only so, but the Lord expects it. As far as worship is concerned though, Christians cannot any more stay at home to have their prayers than they can stay at home and give of their money or partake of the Lord's Supper. Christians who will assemble for worship will pray at home. But people who will not assemble for worship will not pray at home either. Even if they do, it is to no avail until they learn to be faithful to the Lord.

Pray in faith—ask and ye shall receive. Prayer is powerful.

The Goodness Of God

KEN TYLER

The apostle Paul stated in Romans 2:4, "*...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*" "*We love him. because he first loved us*" (John 4:19). In this article, I want you to think carefully about the goodness of God.

1. The goodness of God is shown by the gift of His Son for mankind. Yes, John 3:16 says, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*" Paul in speaking of this gift said, "*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*" (2 Corinthians 9:15). Paul said that God's gift of His Son

for our sins is so wonderful and meaningful that it cannot be adequately described with words. It is an "...*unspeakable gift*". God's goodness is supremely seen by the gift of His Son for our sins. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. How thankful we should be!

2. The goodness of God is seen by the fact that He is no respecter of persons. All men are equal in God's sight. It doesn't matter whether we are rich or poor, black or white, or whatever. God loves all men and wants them to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter said at the house of the Gentile, Cornelius, "*...of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*" (Acts 10:34,35). Yes, God is impartial. This is a wonderful quality that manifests His goodness.
3. The goodness of God is seen by His mercy and care for us. In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God is described as "*...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*". These are marvelous statements that show God's goodness. Peter wrote, "*casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). Where would we be without God's mercy, concern, and kindness? We are told in Hebrews 13:5, "*...I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*." What a wonderful promise!

I want to ask you, has the goodness of God led you to repentance? There's no question about God's goodness. Do you love Him because He first loved you? John said, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments...*" (1 John 5:3). Friends, the God of heaven is good. May we all gladly serve Him.

PASCAL'S WAGER

KERRY HOLTON

French philosopher, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), made an argument for the existence of God which has come to be known as "Pascal's Wager." It does not prove that God exists. But, it provides incentive for one to search for God and to study and restudy the arguments that seek to prove God's existence.

Pascal's Wager asks: "Where are you going to place your bet?"

If you place it *with* God and there is *no* God, you lose *nothing*. If you place it *against* God and *He exists*, you lose *everything*."

Consider this line of thinking. What does a person lose by believing in God? What does he lose by living for Christ? Not one thing. The Christian life is full of joy, meaning, and satisfaction. It provides a way to cope with adversity and live guilt-free. Many have lived the Christian life for many years, and they would all testify, "We are not disadvantaged in the least. The best and most rewarding life in the world must be the life of a believer!" So, a believer in God will enjoy a wonderful life, even if God does not exist.

But, what if God does exist, and one does not believe in him? What if a person rejects God and His will? What if he is ungodly, only to realize one day that God is and that He punishes for an eternity those who did not acknowledge His existence by the way they lived? This person would lose everything. Jesus said, "*Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matthew 10:28). **It just doesn't make sense to bet against God.**

So, where will you place your bet? Are you willing to risk your eternal happiness on the remote chance that God does not exist? Please don't. Your life is too precious to risk on such a foolish wager. Live for God!

CARING FOR THE NEEDY, WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

WENDELL WINKLER

INTRODUCTION

Every time the growth of Jerusalem church is mentioned, it is mentioned in connection with doing good and helping the needy. (Acts 2:47 and 2:44,45; 4:4,21 and 4:9; Acts 4:33 and 4:34-35; Acts 5:14 and 4:34-5:13; Acts 6:7 and 6:1-6).

I. God Has Always Been A Protection Of The Poor And Needy

(1). This is obvious from the institution of the sabbatical year, (Ex.23:10-11; Deut.15:1-15).

(2) God prohibits oppressing the poor and needy whether they are our brethren or strangers. (Deut. 24:14).

(3) God promises the needy that He will not forget them.

(Ps.9:18), that He will arise for the poor and needy and give them safety (Ps. 12:5), that He will deliver them (Ps.35:10), that He raise the poor and lift the needy (Ps. 113:7), that He will be strength, refuge, and shadow to them (Isa. 25:4), and that He will not forsake them. (Isa. 41:17).

(4) Read especially Ps. 146:5-10 to get a picture of God's compassion for the afflicted and distressed.

(5) God pronounces a woe on them who oppress the poor. (Isa. 10:1-2; 3:13-15).

II. In Both Testaments We Read That God Has Instructed His People To Care For The Poor And Needy

(1) Old Testament references: Prov. 29:7 ; 31:9,20; Ps. 82: 1-4. It is the wicked who neglect and mistreat the poor. (Ps 37:14; Prov. 30:14).

(2) New Testament references: Eph. 4:28; Jas. 2:14-26; Gal. 2:10; Lk. 3:11; Lk. 11:41; 12:33; I Jn. 3:17; Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 8,9; Lk. 10:30-37; Matt. 19:21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; and Lk. 14:12-24.

(3) However, we have no obligations to the indolent. (2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Thess.4:11)

III. Our Lord's Example Of Compassion For The Poor And Needy Should Be Emulated

(1) We are to emulate our Lord. (Phil.2:5 1 Pet. 2:21-22; Jn. 2:6).

(2) He was compassionate upon the poor and needy. It was prophesied that he would be. (Isa.11: 1-41. Read of his mission in Lk.4:16-19. How often it is said, "*And he had compassion...*" (Mk. 1:41;8:2; 5:19; Matt. 20:34).

(3) Paul emulated this example! (Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 11:1).

IV. The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37) Teaches Us To Help The Needy

In the Good Samaritan we find a tender heart, helping hand, pitiful eye, willing feet, open purse and an assuring voice. His eye, heart, hand, foot and purse were all subservient to the law of God. His philosophy was, "*What is mine is thine and I will share it.*" He translated religion into life. (Matt.7:24-27; 1 Jn.3:17-18).

V. The Early church Affords Us An Example Of Assisting The Poor And Needy

The Jerusalem church (Acts 2:41-45; 4:34-37; 6:1ff), the church at Antioch (Acts 11:27-30), the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (Romans 15:26-28; 2 Cor.8:1-6), and the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 16:1 -2; 2 Cor. 8,9) are all excellent examples.

VI. We Are Not Restricted In Helping Just "Our Own Needy"

(1) We can assist other congregations in caring for their needy. (Acts 11:28-30).

(2) Too, we can assist those in need who are outside the church! Gal.6:10 teaches us to do good unto "all men." (2 Cor. 9:12-13). If we are restricted to helping saints only, if a non-member was attending our services and when leaving was run over by a dashing automobile, we could not call an ambulance to take him to the hospital and pay the bill for such a service! If we are restricted to helping saints only, if we took a bill of groceries to a home and there were children in it who had not obeyed the gospel, we would have to make the stipulation that they could not eat any of the groceries. This position is contrary to the very spirit of Christianity and to the teaching of the scriptures. (Matt.7:12; Jas.2:13; Lk. 14:13-14; Matt. 5:44-48; Rom. 12:20).

VII. How Can We Assist The Poor And Needy?

Such is determined by the character and circumstances of those involved. However, we can assist in the following ways: (1) by providing shelter in our own homes or through rentals, (2) providing clothes (it is a good practice for a congregation to maintain a clothes closet of good, usable clothing; or, clothing might be purchased), (3) providing food, (it is also a good practice for a congregation to maintain a well-stocked food pantry; or, food might also be purchased), (4) paying utility bills, (5) providing medicine and hospital care, (6) sewing for the needy, making clothes, quilts, etc., (7) furnishing transportation for medical purposes, (8) helping secure employment, (9) providing child care during distress, and by (10) personal visits showing concern and compassion.

VIII. Widows And Orphans Are Among The Needy For Whom We Should Care

(1) God has always been a friend to the fatherless and widows. Please make a careful study of the following texts: Ex. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; Deut. 24:19-22; Deut. 26:12-13; Deut. 27: 19; Hos. 14:3; Ps. 68:5; Ps 82:3; Ps 146:9; Prov. 15:25; Ps. 10:14, Zech. 7:9-12; Isa. 1:17,23; Isa. 10:1-2; Jer. 7:6-7; 22:3-4; Jer. 49:11; Ezek. 22:7; Mal.3:5.

(2) What saith the scriptures concerning the church's responsibility to the fatherless and widows? Under normal circumstances, certain ones are charged with the responsibility of caring for those depending upon them. Parents are to care for

their children. (2 Cor. 12:14; 1 Tim. 5:8). Relatives are to care for the widows who are their kin. (1 Tim. 5:4-16, especially vs. 4 and 16; Mk. 7:10-13). However, some are unable or unwilling to do so. Some do not respect the Bible enough to heed it, and some are not able (they may be objects of relief themselves through sickness of famine, Acts 11:28-30). And, when widows and orphans cannot care for themselves, or be cared for by relatives, the church certainly can. Study these texts:

(a) Acts 6:1-8. Here we have an apostolic example of the early New Testament church assisting in the care of widows. Since we follow the apostolic example of the early New Testament church in the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts. 20:7)), we should also follow their example in assisting widows who are in need of such assistance,

(b) 1 Tim. 5:1-16. This passage teaches that the church has an obligation to care for the widows; and, since caring for widows is connected with caring for orphans (Jas. 1:27)), the church has an obligation in caring for both! This passage (1 Tim. 5:1-16) is not teaching that the church cannot help a widow who has no children or who is not 60 years old; but, that unless one has these and the other qualifications listed in the text, she is not to become a permanent charge of the church, (see vs. 9,10).

(c) Jas. 1:27. *"To visit"* in this text means *"to visit for the purpose of comfort and relief, Matt.25:36, 43; Jas. 1:27. (Bagster's Greek English Lexicon). Thayer's Lexicon say's it means, "to look upon or after, to inspect, to examine with the eyes; in order to see how he is, that is to visit, go to see one... the poor and afflicted, (Jas 1:27); the sick (Matt. 25:36,43)."* Notice that pure and undefiled religion consists of (1) keeping oneself unspotted from the world—this is the negative statement; and (2) taking care of widows and orphans—this is the positive statement. Thus, if we are failing to assist widows and orphans, our religion is not the pure and undefiled religion of which James speaks. Be it also observed that if the church as such cannot assist in the care of widows and orphans, then the church as such cannot practice pure and undefiled religion! (This point needs to be observed since some are affirming that only individuals—not the church—have an obligation in this field).

(3) Caring for widows and orphans is not just an individual obligation. The church acted to care for the needy in Acts 11:27-30. It is affirmed by some that Gal. 6:10 means only individuals can do good unto all, If this is true, then the rest of the verse shows

that only individuals can do good unto "the household of faith." However, Acts 11:27-30 proves otherwise. Also, if Gal.6:10 is authorizing individual action only, then, by a study of the context, we must conclude that only individuals can support preachers. (Gal. 6:6,10). However, observe Gal. 1:2 to see that this passage was addressed unto "the churches of Galatia;" therefore, churches can do good unto all men! Now, it is affirmed that individual Christians have obligations in this field of caring for the widows and orphans because of the personal aspect of Jas. 1:27. But, remember, that 1 Tim 5:1-16 teaches that the church has an obligation to the widows; and, since Jas. 1:27 connects caring for orphans and widows, then it necessarily follows that the church also has an obligation in caring for orphans. See Rev. 2:29; *"He (the individual) that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"*. (4) The "how" of caring for widows and orphans is not legislated. When God gives a command and also tells us how to obey the command, the "how" is as important as the "what." However, when God gives a command and does not legislate the exact "how," the command is to be carried out, but the manner is left in the realm of human judgment, with all things being done *"decently and in order"* and in a manner consistent with what God has revealed in His word. To illustrate, God has commanded us to teach His word (Matt. 28:18-20); but, God has not legislated the exact "how" this is to be done. Therefore, the method or medium to be used is a matter of judgment (radio, newspaper, class system etc.). In like manner, God has commanded us to care for the widows and orphans (Jas. 1:27); but, God did not legislate the exact "how" this is to be done. Therefore, such is left in the realm of human judgment. Thus, orphans can be cared for by adoption, in foster homes, in orphan homes, etc.

IX. To Assist The Poor And Needy, The Following We Must Obtain

(1) We must have the right kind of hearts. We must have hearts of compassion, care and sympathy. (1 Jn.3:17). We must have unselfish hearts. (2 Cor.8:1ff)

(2) Faith and works must be joined. (Jas. 2:14ff).

(3) We must properly conceive the nature of our Lord's church. The Lord's church is a body (Eph. 1:22-23; Rom. 12:4-5); therefore, if one member is in need, the other members feel for the individual and will assist. The Lord's church is a family (1 Tim. 3:15); therefore, if one of the members is in need, all other members, loving as

brethren, will assist the needy member.

X. By Helping The Needy We Reap Untold Good Ourselves

(1) It enlarges our capacities of sympathy, understanding, and compassion.

(2) By such we lay up treasures in heaven. (Matt.6:19-21; 19:21; Lk.12:33-34; I Tim. 6:17-19.)

(3) It will cure selfishness, greed, avarice, and covetousness. (I Cor. 13:4-8; I Jn. 3:17).

(4) By such we assure ourselves a welcome on the other side. (Lk. 16:9).

(5) We have the joy of knowing that we are ministering unto Christ. (Matt. 25:31-46; Prov. 14:31).

(6) Showing mercy, we reap mercy. (Matt. 5:7; Jas. 2:13; Prov. 19:17. The opposite is true, too. Prove. 21:13).

(7) Such brings joy and happiness to our soul. (Prov. 14:21; 2 Cor. 8:2).

(8) God will see that we have the necessities of life; yea, he will bless us with material prosperity. (Prov. 28:27; Prov. 22:9; 19:17; Lk. 6:38).

(9) By such, the favor of God rests upon us; yea, we will be blessed. (Dan.4:27; Ps. 41:1; Acts 20:35).

XI. We Shall Be Rewarded Or Cursed, Accordingly

One of the reasons God took away Sodom was because *"neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy."* (Ezk. 16:49). One reason God poured out His indignation upon Israel was that they had *"vexed the poor and needy."* (Ezek. 22:29-31). Study carefully also Jer. 5:25-29; Amos 8:4-10; 2:6-7; 4:1ff. However, God promised to bless them if they would assist the poor. (Jer.22:16). One reason the rich man was lost was that he had neglected poor and needy Lazarus. (Lk. 16:19-31). Those on the Lord's right hand at judgment will have fed the hungry and clothed the naked. (Matt 25:31-46).

CONCLUSION

The Lord still speaks as He did in Zechariah's days: *"Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother."* (Zech.7:9). *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."* (Mic. 6:8).

SO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

BERT THOMPSON

Are you a person who believes in God? Are you among the number that believes mankind is specially created in the image of God? Do you really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Savior of the world? If so, you are in good company. Many great minds down through the ages have been firm believers in God. Oftentimes we are led to believe that anyone who is anybody has long since shed their belief in God for a more "intellectual" stance of atheism or agnosticism, with accompanying belief that organic evolution has produced all we see around us through genetic mutations and natural selection. But it's just not true.

Many famous statesmen, scholars, scientists, artists, poets, and other such celebrities have held to a belief in an Almighty God. Not "everyone" believes in evolution, with its "god" of atheism, as we are led to believe. Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, former past president of the New York Academy of Sciences, affirmed that "so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance." Dr. Edwin Conklin, Princeton biologist, stated: "The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop."

The famous French General, Napoleon I (Bonaparte), observed that "All things proclaim the existence of God." British poet William Cowper commented that "In all the vast and minute, we see the unambiguous footsteps of ...God." Emerson, another famous poet, wrote that "Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere." Dr. George Washington Carver, when asked one day what he was doing, replied, "God and I are working on the peanut." United States President Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the Earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God."

Dr. Johannes Kepler, the famous German mathematician and astronomer who formulated the three basic laws of planetary motion, described his research as "thinking God's thoughts after Him." Dr. E. W. Maness once said, "If the word 'God' were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud,

engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence of God in the world would be no stronger than it is." Will Durant, the famous humanist, even once admitted, "The greatest question of our time is not communism versus individualism, not Europe versus America, not even the East versus the West; it is whether man can bear to live without God."

The psalmist stated, *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). The apostle Paul wrote: *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and glory, so that they are without excuse"* (Romans 1:20).

Not everyone believes in organic evolution. Many people through the ages have believed in God — for good reason.

IT'S A MIRACLE!

STAN MITCHELL

The story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea certainly is amazing. And there are of course many stories like it in the Bible. Little "Johnny" will learn very soon of the day when the sun and the moon stood still at Joshua's command, and when an axe head floated for Elisha's benefit. There will be the matter of 5,000 people who were fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

Of course intelligent readers on the verge of the 21st Century are far too sophisticated to believe in actual miracles. With half an eye on skeptical friends and colleagues, they try to rationally explain away the miracles. Jesus was walking on a sandbank hidden from the sight of the Apostles, you see, and in the dim light of evening they jumped to the conclusion that He was walking on water. And Scriptures are not literally inspired by the Spirit of God; they are, instead, the embellished accounts of an adoring church about their teacher and master, Jesus of Nazareth.

I remember listening to a professor in graduate school on this subject once. The specific incident we were studying was the story of Elisha's axe, rising like a cork to the surface of the water (2 Kings 6:1-6).

One bright student raised his hand, and asked, "Professor, wouldn't you say that this story is better understood as a metaphor, for whatever spiritual lesson the writer wanted to draw for his readers,

rather than taking it literally, as if the axe head floated by magic?"

I'll never forget what the professor said: "Jim," (or whatever his name was), "I start with the resurrection of Jesus. If I can accept that God raised Jesus from the dead, then I may as well accept all the claims of miraculous power the Bible makes."

I don't believe in magic, or Santa Claus, or your friendly neighborhood psychic. But I do believe in an incomparable God, the creator of heaven and earth, and the Father of our savior, Jesus Christ. Not the least of His miracles is the mercy, outrageous and absolute, which He offers each of us. It was secured on a cross one afternoon almost two thousand years ago, and that is definitely a story **you wouldn't believe, unless you were told** about it by God Himself! *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

The Main Issue in the Church Is **AUTHORITY**

MAXIE B. BOREN

It seems to me there is one *vitally important* matter that has become obscured in the midst of brotherhood differences and controversies: **Have we perhaps lost sight of whose church it is?**

Surely we would all agree that the Bible is the revealed will of Almighty God to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and that in the Bible God plainly tells us to heed His Son (Matthew 17:5), to whom He has given **all authority** (Matthew 28:18)!

During His personal ministry, Jesus said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). The rock upon which Christ said He would build His church was the truth of His divinity — that indeed He was (yes, is!) the Son of God (see verse 16)! Jesus affirmed that not even death would be able to prevail against His church! In fact, Jesus prevailed over death, and by His resurrection undeniable proof of His deity was clearly declared (Romans 1:4). Ascending back to the Father, He was given all power and dominion, and God *"put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:21-23; see also 1 Peter

3:22). This was in direct fulfillment of the vision Daniel saw, recorded in Daniel 7:13-14:

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

*Then to Him was given **dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.**"*

He did establish on earth the church of which He spoke, having its beginning in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost day (i.e., a Jewish feast day—Leviticus 23:15-16, also called "feast of weeks," or "feast of harvest"—Exodus 34:22) following His resurrection (Acts 2). This "setting up of the kingdom" took place even as the prophets of old had foretold it would (see such passages as Isaiah 2:1-2 and Daniel 2:44, etc.).

Christ is the head of His church, and He is to have all the preeminence in it (Colossians 1:18). Thus, whatever we do, in word or in deed, it is to be done by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Therefore, whatever the subject might we argue over, we had all better keep in mind **whose church it is!** On the matter of **worship**, let us listen to Christ and His inspired apostles (John 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 14:40). On the matter of **doctrine**, let us listen to Christ (John 8:31-32; Mark 7:6-9; 2 John 9-11). On the matter of the **undenominational nature of the church**, read the book of Ephesians — there is but **one true church!** And that **one church** belongs to Christ! Let us not forget this truth!

Does The Holy Spirit Dwell In A Christian?

SUNNY DAVID

Reading from Romans 8:9-11 we observe that the apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, made the statement that the Holy Spirit does dwell in a Christian. The question, however, is often asked: *How* does the Holy Spirit dwell in a Christian?

First of all, we must accept the fact that there are many things in the Scriptures which we do not understand by human reasoning, but we accept them and believe them simply because they are

written in God's book. For instance, the Bible teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, and that the first man was created from the dust of the ground (Genesis 1:1; 2:7). Again, Christ made the statement and it is written in the Bible that he who believes and is baptized will be saved; and that Christ adds the saved ones to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). *All such teachings of the Bible we accept by faith.*

We believe these to be true because they are written in the Bible. We cannot understand them by asking how it is possible or how was it done.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit, according to the Bible, is God (Acts 5:3,4). God dwells in His children (2 Corinthians 6:16). There is absolutely nothing mystical or miraculous about it. God does not have to work miracles or do supernatural things through His children to prove that He lives in them. According to the Bible, the Godhead—God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—live in a Christian, just as a child of God lives in Christ or in God or the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:12; Galatians 5:25). "We in Him and He in us," according to Jesus' prayer in John 17:21-23.

Notice, what the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20: "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" Paul was saying that after he became a Christian Christ lived in him and he lived in Christ!

What this is really defining is the relationship between God and His children. Because they have listened to His inspired word of the Holy Spirit, and have believed and obeyed His will, continuing to walk in it, thereby God's children are led by His Spirit (Romans 8:1,14; 2 Timothy 3:16). This does not mean that a Christian is led by a mysterious inner feeling. However, it does mean that the Holy Spirit leads the Christian when the Christian reads or hears God's written word from the Bible, "rightly dividing" or "handling aright" that word (2 Timothy 2:15), and walks according to His written instructions.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart and the life of a Christian, just as Christ does. "*...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...*" (Ephesians 3:16, 17). He does not dwell in a person as the demons did in the days of Christ, against one's own will, and overpowering the person's

own decision-making process. But, through faith, God and Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in the faithful Christian. Led by the Holy Spirit of God, through His written word, the Christian bears *"the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Galatians 5:22,23).

The body of a Christian, says the Bible, is the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit of God dwells in it. *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:9-11).

The Christian's guarantee that he will be resurrected from the dead is the fact that *"the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in (the Christian, so) He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom

HOLLIS MILLER

Some important lessons for modern times can be learned from Paul's words recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16. What the apostle wrote by inspiration certainly ranks among the most instructive verses in the Bible. In them he declared that the message of the cross of Christ is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to all who are being saved.

The philosophers known to the Corinthians had been unable through their wisdom to deliver men from enslavement to moral and spiritual darkness. They had been unable to do so because their philosophic eyes were incapable of penetrating beyond the boundaries of human thought.

Had philosophy been able to deliver men from the realm of darkness into the realm of light surely the Greeks would have

supplied the bridge. They could boast of some of the greatest thinkers ever to walk the earth. Yet their genius had utterly failed to provide men with the truth that sets them free.

In the scripture cited above, Paul declared that the cross of Christ is *God's wisdom*, the wisdom which the wise of this world think is foolishness. The apostle's statement is by no means limited to the first century world. Many today rejoice when the faith of Christians is attacked by theorists of various descriptions, slandered, or laughingly ridiculed. Yet Paul declared that it is these very people who are themselves acting foolishly.

What should the church today learn from 1 Corinthians 1:18 — 2:16? One obvious lesson is that when the Gospel is rejected, nothing can be gained either for God or for men by turning to human wisdom for a substitute message. Another is that worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom do not equal each other. It is therefore a dangerous thing to assume that worldly learning within itself will better equip one to either proclaim the Gospel or to lead the church. Unless the wisdom gleaned from the wise of this world is supervised by heavenly wisdom one is poorly prepared to lead others into total faith in the sufficiency of the cross of Christ.

At Corinth the Gospel made its greatest appeal to those who were not enthralled by their own wisdom, power, and riches. Paul stated it thusly: *"For see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."* Just how this stated fact applies to different societies in different times may be a flexible matter, but experience seems to teach us that even today biased worldly wisdom, power, and wealth do not equip many for reception of the Gospel. God's ways are not worldly man's way, and it still remains true that the cross of Christ is foolishness to those who think more highly of their own wisdom than they do of God's wisdom.

Just Who Is This Jesus?

CLEM THURMAN

"Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou

art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:13-16).

People have long given a variety of answers to the question, "Who is this Jesus?" The doctrine of "Docetism" (3rd century) claimed that Jesus only "seemed" to come to earth and do miracles and die. Others claimed Jesus was a prophet of God, but was not the Son of God. Some today claim Jesus was just a man, and the miracles He did were fabrications of His apostles as they told the story of His life later.

But I believe we can answer with certainty who Jesus was, and is. Let us go to the Bible and see what God says about Him.

JESUS CHRIST WAS REALLY A MAN

Despite the folly of all such evasions, Jesus Christ stands forth in the world as a real historical character. No scholar can deny - from historical records alone - that Jesus lived in the land of Israel, nor can any discount the effect of His life on that land. Therefore, from history, all must admit His birth, His life, His relationship with the apostles, His death and His humanity.

Here was an historical character who lived about one-third of a century, born into a peasant family, received no formal education, lived in a small backward land, never traveled more than about seventy miles from where He was born, rubbed elbows with only a few people, and was acquainted with poverty, need and pain all of His days on earth. He had as helpers rude fishermen, a tax collector and others of low estate. But He left the greatest impact on the world that has ever been left by any man!

JESUS CHRIST WAS ALSO GOD

No other character on earth ever claimed such affinity with God! Jesus said, *"I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me"* (John 6:38). That claim was also made by the apostles (see our text, Matt. 16). As the apostle John wrote: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father)"* (John 1:1-2,14). The Scriptures say that He *"existed in the form of God"* but *"took the form of a man"* (Phil. 2:5-7).

Jesus stated clearly His mission on earth: *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work"* (John 4:34). He made the claim that He was from God, and He was either telling the truth or was a liar and a fraud. Some will contend that He was

a good man, but not the Son of God. But Jesus claimed equality with God: *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). Could anyone lie about that and still be a good man!? When He was baptized by John, God spoke: *"A voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17). Jesus was, indeed, the Christ, the Son of God.

Many, in times past and at present, have a problem with this concept: "He cannot be both man and God," they claim. But He was!! In fact, it was necessary that He be God, for He was to be the Savior of the world, and only God can save. But it was also necessary that He be man, in order to live a perfect life (Heb. 4:15) and offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins: *"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Heb. 2:14-15). If Jesus were only a man, he could not be a Savior, with the power to forgive sins. But if He were only God, He could not be an effective High Priest and Mediator (Heb. 2:17-18; 7:25-27). Jesus was unique - He was both man and God.

JESUS CHRIST HAD AUTHORITY FROM HEAVEN

Jesus claimed the right to demand obedience from all people on earth. Not only so, but He taught that such obedience held priority over love of father, mother or anyone else on earth (Luke 9:59-62; 18:29-30). If one made such claims today, people would rebel, saying, "No man has such authority." And that is right—no **MAN!** But He was not just a man, He was more than a man, being both God and man. And what He did proved that.

When the apostles saw Him calm the storm -wind and waves - on the Sea of Galilee, they said, *"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt. 8:27; 16:16). They saw Him heal the sick of all kinds of diseases—even including leprosy (Mk. 1:29-34)! They saw Him raise the dead (Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:38-46).

All of these signs were for a purpose: *"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name"* (John 20:30-31). Is it any wonder that

Nicodemus said to Jesus, *"We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2).

JESUS CHRIST HAD POWER TO FORGIVE SINS

All must recognize that the power to forgive sins rests in God alone. Jesus, *"God who became flesh,"* had that power. A paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, while Jewish critics were present (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus said to the man, *"Son, thy sins are forgiven."* Jewish scribes considered this blasphemy: *"Who can forgive sins but one, even God?"* But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said: *"Which is easier, to say to the sick of palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"* He then told the man, *"Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house."* And he did! Jesus proved His authority.

After His death and resurrection, Jesus met with the apostles and told them: *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:18-19). Nothing had been withheld from Him, for He was (and is) the Son of God. He had the unlimited authority to commission the work that was to revolutionize the whole world. And He had the authority to determine the terms of our salvation from sin: *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:15-16).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

In the midst of the "political correctness" which declares we should "honor and respect" all religions, Jesus stands out as a maverick! He was unique, and He knew it. He said with certainty, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). He offered no "multiple choice." He didn't try to mealy-mouth his gospel by saying that there is good in all religions. Jesus plainly stated that He is the only way to God, that none can come to God except by Him! Does this make invalid a large number of "world religions"? Certainly it does. But it is still true.

The apostles told the unbelieving Jews of this uniqueness of Jesus in Acts 4:12, *"And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men,*

wherein we must be saved." With regard to His teaching He said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35). And later, near the end of His life here on earth, He stated: *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). At the final judgment of God, the standard will not be what the government said, what our neighbors thought, what our parents felt or what "great religious leaders" taught. We will be judged by the words of Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST IS ETERNAL

As noted above, His word will last forever. And so will He! He promised the apostles, *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:20). He is a Friend that is always at our side and is attentive to our needs. The glory of earthly heroes soon pales and fades, but the glory of the Son of God shines brighter and brighter as the years pass.

The apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, *"Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification"* (Rom. 4:25). And because of His resurrection, He ever abides as our Savior and Advocate: *"But he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:24-25). The apostle John writes of this, also: *"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1).

This world will not endure. *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Pet. 3:10). But Christ will remain: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever"* (Heb. 13:8). When some were turning back from following Jesus, He asked the twelve, *"Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God"* (John 6:67-69). Friend, that is still the only logical, reasonable, reply.



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