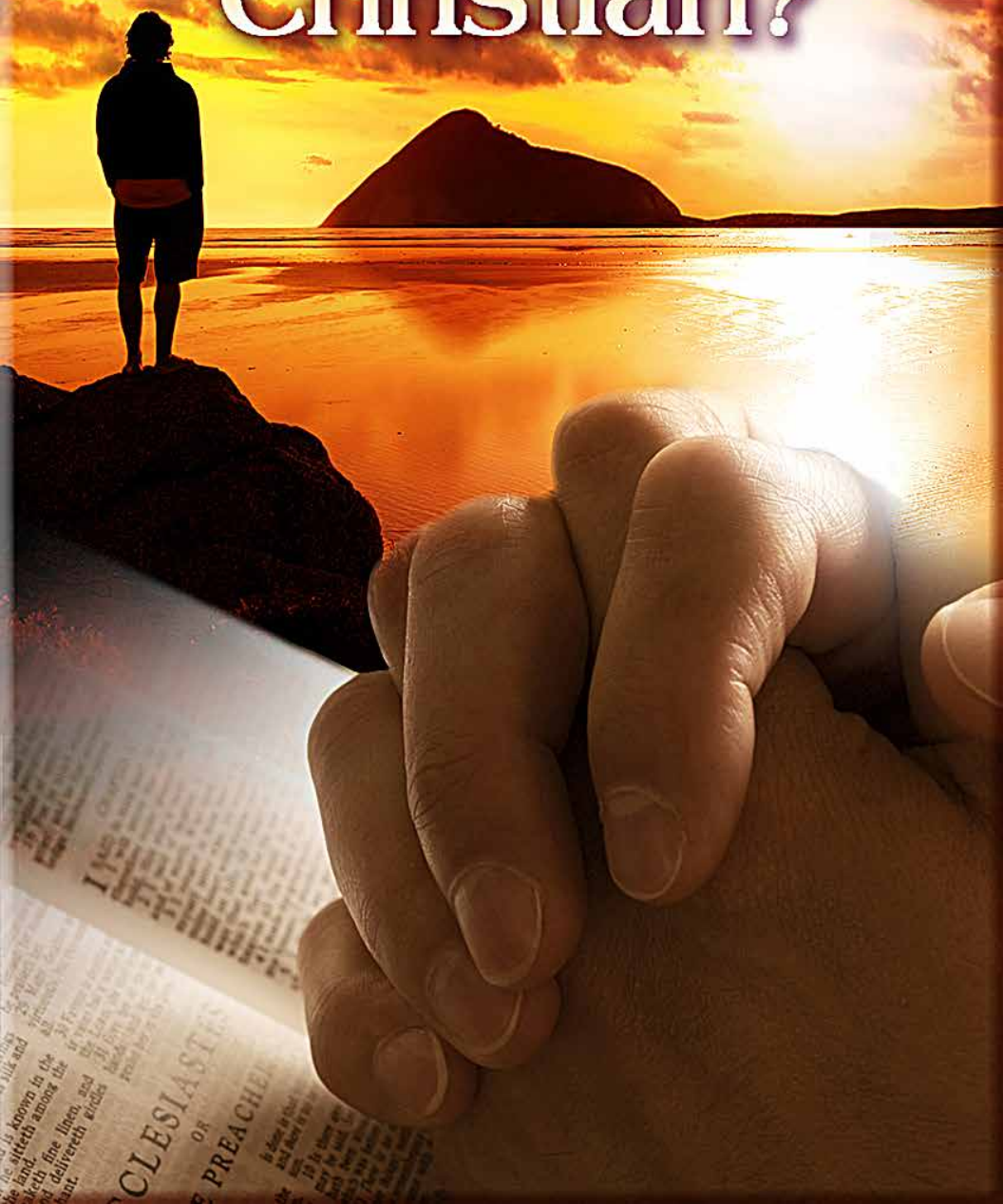


Why Am I A Christian?



Why Are You A Christian?

Chapter 1

Who is a Christian?

The vast majority of people in North America identify themselves as Christians. Do you? Perhaps you are not sure. Perhaps you are very sure and wonder about others who do. For example, even the majority of criminals in the U.S. prison system identify themselves as "Christians."

Just how far back in time can "Christians" be identified? The name "Christian" was coined in the First Century A.D.-about five years after Pentecost. "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." In the "church at Antioch" these Christians were also called "disciples." Acts 11:26; 13:1, "Church" means "called out ones" while "disciple" means "learner or pupil" and/or "adherent and follower of a teacher." Therefore, "Christians" are defined as ones "called out" from the world to be followers and pupils of Jesus Christ.

Can 200 million people in North America all be true Christians? Jesus said, "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). He identified the quantity of his followers as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). Jesus placed very restrictive terms for discipleship.

What Do Christians Do?

Jesus' disciples would know and obey the truth. John 8:31,32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Jesus' disciples would continue in his word, that is, daily study the Bible. They would receive a knowledge of his truth that would so enthrall them that they would forsake all that they have (Luke 14:33) in materialism and goods to be his disciples. In Mark 8:35 Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." This means consecrating our all to the Lord and using it in his service as he directs. Further stringent conditions of discipleship are found in Luke 14:26: unless a man "hate" (love less) his father, mother, wife, children, brethren, even his own life, "he

cannot be my disciple." Again in Luke 9:23: "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Jesus' terms of discipleship for being a Christian, indeed, are demanding. Is it any wonder he predicted that only a "little flock" would qualify? Oh yes, many would call themselves Christians as Jesus predicted in Matthew 7:22,23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name. . .done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you. . ." (as Christians). Yes, the terms of discipleship are demanding. The faithful Christian does not actively seek financial and health blessings. But the compensating spiritual blessings are a hundredfold in this life and then life eternal (Mark 10:30).

In western civilization "Christian" denotes a culture to which the majority belong. In Scripture, "Christian" denotes a lifestyle characteristic of an extreme minority. Certainly 200 million people have not left all to follow Christ. But have you left all to follow Christ?

Why Some Become Christians

Some become Christians for fear of eternal judgment. After all, "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23) But God saves us and forgives our sins "for His name's sake." (Psalm 25:11) Similarly, Paul observes in Ephesians 1:7,12 that "we have redemption through his blood. . .that we should be to the praise of His [God's] glory."

Then there are those who become Christians in order to gain health and prosperity, believing that faith in a "secret kingdom" and its power will grant their desires. How sad! The height of Christian concern should not be "what can God do for me" but rather "what can I do to glorify God." Remember the words of Psalm 31:3, "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me."

Self-Centered vs. Christ-Centered Christians

Evidently the church at Corinth included many self-centered Christians. Paul had to chide them in 1 Corinthians 4:8-14:

"You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would, indeed that

you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. . . We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." (New American Standard Translation - NAS)

Then Paul admonished these self-centered Christians to be Christ-centered. "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 4:16;11:1, NAS) Paul's economic poverty and persecution in the Lord's service were merely results from following the example set by Christ. Did Christ experience poverty in the Father's service? "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

But, exponents of the idea, "God wants Christians to be wealthy," are quick to reply that Jesus experienced "relative poverty." Jesus was prosperous, they say. Only by comparison with his previous heavenly glory, he was poor. However, Jesus spelled out his poverty on earth in Luke 9:58. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This statement of Jesus' poverty is all the more meaningful because it was his reply to a person in the preceding verse who said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Following Jesus does not mean automatically living in poverty, but it does require sacrificing economic interests for his cause, yes, committing all wealth to him. Have you committed all your means to God?

For those who would use Christianity for financial gain, the Devil, who is the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), is anxious and able to give them "the world on a silver platter" as long as they are willing to live a self-centered lifestyle instead of a Christ-centered lifestyle. Matthew 4:8-11

Actually Jesus' ministry was a life of sacrificing all personal and earthly interests in doing the Heavenly Father's will, as he "poured out his soul unto death."

(Hebrews 10:9; Isaiah 53:12) The Scriptures use several symbols to illustrate this life of sacrifice. For example, there is the sacrificial death of an animal in the tabernacle. Also Jesus' water baptism (immersion) pictured his complete submersion into his Father's will. Three years after his water baptism Jesus said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened [stressed] till it be accomplished." (Luke 12:50) Yes, Jesus' complete submersion into his Father's will meant sacrificing self in the interest of others (Acts 20:35), suffering for truth and righteousness (Psalm 69:7-9) and enduring the cross (Hebrews 12:2,3).

When James and John asked if they could sit on his right hand and left hand in his glory, Jesus replied, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:35-39) Like James and John we must drink of Jesus' cup of suffering and share his baptism of sacrificial death. Thus the Apostle Paul said, "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:11,12). Becoming a Christian does not mean preserving and prospering self, but yielding self even to the point of suffering with Christ.

The Reason We Are Christians

In Romans 6:3, Paul speaking of our real baptism said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Yes, we must follow Jesus' lifestyle of sacrificially dying to self interest. This will mean sacrificing worldly pleasures and interests that are not even sinful while serving the cause of the Lord.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:29 speaks of Christians being "baptized for the dead." From God's standpoint the whole human race, except Christians, are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). That's why Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22). Why are you a Christian? Sharing in Christ's sacrificial death will benefit the whole human race. If you suffer and die with Jesus (being baptized for the dead) you will live and reign (2 Timothy 2:11,12) with him as king and priest a thousand years (Revelation 20:6) for the benefit of the dead (and dying) world of humankind.

In summary, thus far, the Scriptures reveal that:

- True Christians will be numerically few, a little flock.

- The terms of discipleship are stringent.
- Christians reign with Christ in his 1,000-year Kingdom on earth for the benefit of the dead world of mankind.

Is God Trying to Convert the World Now?

Jesus promised, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14) Does this promise mean that now is the only time of salvation for all people? The common words ALL and EVERY are two of the most important words in the Bible. In Luke 2:10 the angel who announced the birth of Jesus said, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people." Verses 30 and 31 speak of salvation for "ALL people." 1 Timothy 4:10 speaks of God as "the Saviour of ALL men."

The simple logic of Jesus dying for ALL is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "As in Adam ALL die even so in Christ shall ALL be made alive." Similarly, Romans 5:18 shows that "by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon ALL men." Father Adam sinned with the unborn race yet in his loins. Therefore, ALL were born in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psalm 51:5) and thus worthy of death. God knew that Adam, due to a lack of experience would disobey. Thus 1 Peter 1:19,20, speaks of the blood of Christ as being foreordained for our redemption even before Adam was created. Since ALL were lost in Adam, it was necessary that Jesus "by the grace of God should taste death for EVERY man" (Hebrews 2:9).

John 1:7 speaks of Jesus as "the Light, that ALL men through him might believe." Verse 9 says he is "the True Light, which lighteth EVERY man that cometh into the world." How can this be? Countless millions died before the time of Jesus. They never saw the True Light! They never heard the name of Jesus. And since the death of Jesus, millions died never hearing of the only "name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). If you are a Bible-believing Christian, you know that no one is saved through ignorance but only by believing in Jesus as his or her saviour. This is a seeming contradiction. The answer is found in 1 Timothy 2:5,6, ". .

.Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for ALL, to be testified in due time"-a plain statement that Jesus died for "ALL." If Jesus died for "ALL," why is it that ALL do not have the opportunity to hear this good news? The key of harmony is found in the phrase "due time." The Greek word translated "time" is plural; i.e., times (Thayer's Lexicon of the New Testament). The knowledge that Jesus is a ransom for ALL will be testified "in due times." The due time for those God is calling to be of the Church is during the Christian Age. The due time for ALL other people to understand is during the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

Now is not the time for ALL to hear the name of Jesus. God is not trying to convert the world between the first and second advents. If He was, then He has obviously failed. For after nearly 2,000 years, less than one third of the world's population even claims to be Christian. The fact is Jesus predicted only that the gospel would be a witness to the world, not that all would be converted before the end of the Age.

Mark 4:11,12, specifically states that God is not trying to convert the world now. Jesus said to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Ponder well this scripture.

If Jesus died for ALL, why has God arranged that many would not be able to understand the Bible and, therefore, not be converted and have their sins forgiven? The Bible is not written like a textbook system of logic. God purposely had the Bible written in parables and symbols, so that many would not be converted and have their sins forgiven. This is why there are over 250 Christian denominations with so many different interpretations of the Bible. God has not attempted to convert the world, but is only calling a "little flock" at this time. If man's eternal destiny was dependent upon understanding the Bible now, our God of love (1 John 4:8) would have surely made the Bible plain and simple for all to understand.

Acts 15:14-17 reveals that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name [not to convert all]. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return [Second Advent] and

build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God]. . .that the residue [REMAINDER] of men might seek after the Lord and ALL the Gentiles. . . ." God's work since the death of Jesus has not been to convert all humankind, but merely to take out or to call out a "people for his name." In the Kingdom, all the REMAINDER of men, who are not of these called out ones, will have their opportunity to seek the Lord.

The Christian Calling

The New Testament continually calls Christians-the "church." Remember the Greek word translated "church" means "called out ones." In other words, a minority is called out from the majority of the human race. Consequently, many scriptures use the words "elect," "elected," "election," and "elect's" (sometimes translated "chosen") to denote God's dealing with Christians. Matthew 24:31; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:10 and 2 Timothy 2:10 are a few examples of this usage. This word describes the special selection of a smaller class ("little flock") from the human race before all of humanity has its opportunity for salvation in the Kingdom.

What is this special calling or selection of the church? Christians are called to the multiple profession of judges, priests and kings of mankind in Christ's Kingdom. What an honor! At first our faith staggers. But the Scriptures are explicit on this point. 1 Corinthians 6:2 states that "the saints shall judge the world." 1 Peter 2:9 shows Christians are called to be a "royal [kingly] priesthood." Similarly, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 states we are called of God to be "kings and priests" and "we shall reign on the earth." Revelation 20:6 states that Christians "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Judges, priests, kings! What a profession Christians have been called to! But what a rigorous training course the Christian must pursue to attain this profession. Do you as a Christian see God working in your life-preparing you for this profession?

Judges

Christians will share with Christ in judging the world (1 Corinthians 6:2; John 5:22). John 5:28, 29 states that "ALL that are in the graves. . .shall come forth, they [Christians]

that have done good, unto the resurrection of life [live and reign with Christ, Revelation 20:4]; and they that have done evil [the remainder of men] to a resurrection by krisis [Greek]." Many translations say, "resurrection of judgment," but the Greek is literally "resurrection of krisis." A doctor will speak of a patient reaching his crisis. He doesn't mean the patient will die. Rather, the crisis time is when the patient will take a turn for the better or the worse. The "krisis" or probation time for the remainder of men will be in Christ's Kingdom. Therefore, their trial will not be based on the works of this life but their works during the Kingdom. Thus, the risen Lord says in Revelation 22:12, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work SHALL BE." Christians will share with Christ in judging people according to their works in the Kingdom, their probation time.

The word "krisis" has been incorporated into many different languages. The Chinese write in symbols. And they use two symbols to denote "krisis." One symbol denotes danger, the other conveys opportunity. Humanity's trial or "krisis" in the Kingdom will offer the opportunity to attain eternal life. But it will also be a time of danger. Those who fail to meet God's conditions for attaining eternal life will be condemned to Second Death (Revelation 20:13-15).

Priests and Kings

Christians will not only be judges, but also merciful and sympathetic priests who will bless each member of the world with every possible help and opportunity to attain eternal life. Thus, the Scriptures show that Jesus and his church (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) will not only be rulers over the remainder of men but also priests, blessers.

Hebrews 9:23 reveals that Israel's tabernacle was a picture of better things to come. After Israel's high priest provided sacrifices for reconciliation on the Day of Atonement, the priests during the remainder of the year instructed, judged and blessed the people. Hebrews 5:1,2, states that Israel's priests could have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Jesus was perfect, but he is able to sympathize with our infirmities as our High Priest

because he was tempted in all points like us yet without sin (Hebrews 2:17,18; 4:15).

Being Made Christ-like

Unlike Jesus we have physical infirmities and moral weakness. Additionally, every hardship and tragedy that happens to the human race also happens to Christians (1 Corinthians 10:13). The word "temptation" would better be rendered trial, actually a test permitted of God to instruct us. But "God is faithful, Who will not suffer [permit] you to be tried above that ye are able." If we are "babes in Christ," God might remove the trial or hardship. But there is "a way of escape" that our "faithful God" would prefer to provide during our hardships and tragedies-that His Holy Spirit would develop in us the spiritual maturity "that ye may be able to bear [endure] it." But why should we endure tragedies instead of having God remove them? Remember God is training us to be sympathetic priests. Thus Peter says in 1 Peter 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Christians who are rightly exercised by their difficulties are changed from glory to glory into the character likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Their exercising the spirit of Christ while struggling with their infirmities and hardships develops in them love, sympathy and understanding for their fellowman.

Just as the firstborn of the nation of Israel was representative of each family in Israel so the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23) will have experienced all the problems, hardships, tragedies mankind has endured. This preparation will qualify them to be merciful and sympathetic priests, judges and rulers of mankind in the Kingdom. Are your difficult experiences making you sympathetic and merciful to others?

There is much more to the Christian life than accepting Jesus. Peter observed in 2 Peter 1:5-11, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. . .for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ." Only if we develop these character qualities will we qualify to reign with Christ as kings and priests in his Kingdom (Revelation 20:6).

With a hope like this we can only conclude as Jesus did, that no suffering or tragedy is too great. Hebrews 12:2-4, ". . .who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

With a hope like this let us follow in his footsteps and "consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (James 1:2, NAS).

The Kingdom

It has already been noted in 1 Timothy 4:10 that God provided salvation for ALL men. Similarly, 1 Timothy 2:3,4 states that God "will have ALL men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge [Greek, accurate knowledge] of the truth." This is a salvation that comes before knowledge. Jesus' ransom for ALL (verse 6) guarantees that ALL who died in Adam will be saved from Adamic death. That is ALL, not called to be of the church, will be awakened from the sleep of death and given an accurate knowledge of the truth. This is the "evil" class of John 5:28,29, which comes forth from the grave to a "resurrection of krisis" or trial.

In the Kingdom, Jesus and his church will embark upon the greatest educational program in history. Isaiah 11:9 states, ". . .for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Also Jeremiah 31:34 says, ". . .for they shall ALL know me from the least of them unto the greatest." Verses 29 and 30 show that for the majority, the Kingdom will provide the first full, fair opportunity for salvation. "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Why the Church is Called First

Why is the true church first selected to share with Christ in the Kingdom work of blessing mankind? One reason can be illustrated by the noble work of Alcoholics Anonymous.

An essential step of A.A. therapy is to assign a former alcoholic to each alcoholic that comes for help. The victim being driven by alcohol will not readily accept help or advice from just anyone. How could anyone know his agony, his depression, his desperation if he has not shared the same experience? But the alcoholic will accept help from a former alcoholic because he knows that this person can understand his agony. And this former alcoholic stands ready at any time to come to his side to plead with him, encourage him and make good suggestions for overcoming. It requires a former alcoholic to rehabilitate an alcoholic.

When people come forth from the grave in Christ's Kingdom, they will be informed that they have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ and they will be made aware of the fact that they are now under the reign of Jesus Christ and his church (1 Corinthians 6:2). What confidence they will have that the church will know just how to enter into their problems! Why? Because the members of the church also were once sinners. Further, humanity will realize that the church representatively experienced all the problems, hardships, and emotional and mental tragedies endured by humanity. Because "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" for them (John 3:16), the church will cherish each individual of the human race. The personal experiences of true Christians in overcoming sin and struggling with their own emotional and psychological problems (2 Corinthians 10:4,5; Hebrews 12:3,4) will give them an "understanding heart" so that they will know when to show compassion on ignorance and when to administer discipline where willfulness is involved (Hebrews 5:2; Luke 12:48). This plan of rehabilitation will work. The majority of humanity will gladly receive the instruction, the disciplining and the nurturing necessary to pass their trial for eternal life.

This plan is the great "restitution" (restoration) project foretold by all the Old Testament prophets (Acts 3:20,21). Does the prospect of participating in this Kingdom work of blessing mankind inspire you to be a faithful Christian?

A Long Process

The restoration of the willing of the remainder of men (Acts 15:17; Revelation 22:17) to mental, moral and physical perfection of human life that was lost in Eden will not be complete until the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ.

Revelation 20:5 states, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the 1,000 years were finished." Some ancient manuscripts do not contain these words. If these words are authentic, they cannot refer to the awakening of the dead because Revelation 11:15-18 reveals that the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which denotes the time during Christ's Second Advent, is also the time that the dead should be judged. Daniel 12:2 as John 5:28,29 speaks of two classes, good and evil, that are raised from the dead. Verse 1 of Daniel 12 establishes the time of the rising of these two classes from the dead as in close proximity to the great tribulation. This tribulation is at the beginning of the 1,000 years and not when the 1,000 years are over. Daniel 12:2 speaks of the evil class experiencing "age-lasting" (Hebrew) shame.

If the phrase in Revelation 20:5, "The rest of the dead [the remainder of men of Acts 15:17] lived not again until the 1,000 years were finished," is authentic-the explanation is evident. All not mentally, morally and physically perfect are dead in God's sight. Thus Jesus said, ". . .let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22). The balance of the 1,000 years will be required to bring all the willing up the "highway" of holiness (Isaiah 35:8) to perfect human life. In this sense, mankind will not be truly alive until the end of the thousand years.

The Blessings of the Kingdom

Isaiah 35 portrays some of the wondrous Kingdom blessings. ". . .the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose" (verse 1). The blind shall see, the deaf shall hear, the lame shall walk, the dumb sing (verses 5 and 6). Verses 8 and 9, speaking of the Highway of Holiness, state that it will be for the "unclean," but the unclean shall not pass over it. This interesting phrase can be compared to an automatic car wash. It is for dirty cars, but dirty cars don't pass over it, because they are clean by the time they reach the end of the car wash. Similarly, the Highway of Holiness is for the morally unclean. But through the instruction and

nurture of Christ and his church, they will step by step be made morally clean. Verse 9 shows no lion shall be there. Peter identified Satan as symbolized by the "lion" (1 Peter 5:8) and Revelation 20:1-3 reveals Satan will be bound (unable to tempt or hinder mankind) during the 1,000-year Kingdom. "But the redeemed shall walk there." Verse 10 concludes, "And the ransomed [Jesus died a ransom for ALL. 1 Timothy 2:6] of the Lord shall return and come to Zion [the Kingdom] with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The climax of the Kingdom work is described in Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Jesus and his church will be the vessels God will use in the Kingdom to pour these glorious blessings on the remainder of men. And if you fulfill the terms of discipleship, you will be one of these instruments of blessing!

You See Your Calling, Brethren

"For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; . . .and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

For the most part, God is bypassing the world's standards of greatness and calling the ordinary of the human race to compose the "little flock." How will this "bring to naught things that are"? Down through history, man's wisdom has tried every conceivable philosophy and political and/or economic ideology, but man has failed to solve humanity's problems. Each page of history is a record of man's inhumanity to man. The flaw is not so much the ideology, but man's selfish heart. History confirms the Biblical teaching that man is born in sin and "shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). The twentieth century started with great expectations. Through science and technology, utopia would be attained! Alas, this century is closing in disillusionment. Communism has failed.

Capitalism is on the verge of bankruptcy. Unprecedented crime, vice, drugs and immorality are the symptoms of a civilization self destructing. In the meantime, the earth is becoming a wasteland of pollution. With over five billion people thinking of self first, could it be otherwise?

Thus the Lord has "brought to nought things that are." Human history has proven the futility of man's efforts. "No flesh can glory in his [God's] presence." No president, prime minister or statesman-or anyone-can boast that he has the solution for all man's individual or collective ills.

But there are a few who have learned early not to trust in the arm of flesh for solutions. Through faith in God's word they realize that only God's Kingdom will completely solve man's ills. They have accepted Jesus as their saviour and made a full consecration to do God's will. Their calling is to be judges, priests and kings with Christ in God's Kingdom. These Christians are not relieved of their share of the tragedies common to man (1 Corinthians 10:13). Although many of mankind become bitter or hardened by the tragedies of this life, consecrated Christians have the peace of God which passeth all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Their faith realizes that tragedy provides the Lord an opportunity to develop in them a tender and understanding heart.

The loss of a loved one-husband, wife, parent, child-can mentally scar. Physical tragedy such as being crippled, blind or deaf can leave one a forgotten member of the human family. Drug addicts, alcoholics, the mentally ill have found that few can understand. Then there are the scars of mental or physical abuse by a stranger or even a loved one. To those in economic poverty, nothing could be worse. Then there is loneliness. Some have experienced a darkness of loneliness that no human hand could reach. To consecrated Christians these various experiences provide a unique opportunity to patiently endure, while the Spirit of God transforms them day by day into the likeness of Christ (1 Peter 1:7; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Foremost is the struggle of subduing sinful flesh and its interests. These are the "fightings within" (2 Corinthians 7:5; 10:4-6; Hebrews 12:4). The Christian's struggle against his own fallen flesh gives him compassion and understanding concerning the sin ingrained in the hearts of men. A priest is one "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5:2

Finally the church will be united with Christ during his return and share the glory of his Kingdom. Like him (1 John 3:2) they shall be compassionate priests, understanding judges, and benevolent kings (Revelation 20:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2). As a composite they will fully understand the sin sick, mentally warped, emotionally scarred, physically marred world of mankind.

Why are you a Christian? If you yearn to glorify God-serving Him by blessing all-God will certainly grant you this deepest prayerful desire.