



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free".

John 8:32

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"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

How often do we not know how or even sometimes lack the desire to hear others and instead, we are hasty in words and anger. Today there are so many who talk but so few who do. Few go from words to deeds, and if they do, it is largely for their own benefit. Today, many have learned how to speak beautifully, from politicians to church leaders. Both politicians and church leaders allegedly fight for good and defend the interests of ordinary people, however, in both cases, these interests remain unsatisfied. Politicians, although they lie in

false prophets. All this really happened, and more than once. However, the prophecy with which Jesus Christ summed up the end of the world has never been fulfilled. He said: *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come"*.

Anyone who has even the slightest interest in the history of mankind could notice a simple thing: the gospel has never been so preached throughout the world as it has over the past two decades. Doors for missionaries have been opened almost everywhere. Today, perhaps, there is no place where the Good News has not yet reached. Even in the most remote tribes,



tians. More and more often they join the ranks of believers, as they used to join the Komsomol... Jesus Christ, being on earth, expressed this idea: *"I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).*

It seems to me that today, more than ever, all Christian people should seriously think about the fact that the end of the world is not far off. The last sign that this will happen soon is already at the stage of its completion. Probably, after all, it is time for all Christians to move from words to deeds. There has been enough arguing and enmity with each other, proving whose church

A SIGN OF THE END TIMES

many ways, at least do not hide behind God. Things are much worse today with the believing people, because deception on a religious basis is the most terrible deception, since it is covered up with the name of Jesus Christ. Today, unfortunately, there are very few leaders of churches with a clean reputation, since in many ways their personal interests are above God's. The Lord warned of what would happen in the last days: *"And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:4-14).*

Reading the prediction said by Jesus Christ, one can say that this does not apply to today, since everything that has been said has been prevalent in all ages. For there were wars, famines, and plagues, and earthquakes, and people rebelled against people, and there were many

missionaries have already visited more than once.

"The Lord said: 'But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be'" (Matt. 24:36-39).

It is amazing, because everyone today lives exactly as they lived in the days of Noah before the flood, that is, they do not find any importance to the fact that, by all indications, the end of the world is very close. Yes, indeed, no one knows what day and hour the world will end except God. However, right now, you need to already be ready to meet with Him. The last sign of the approaching end of the world has almost come true, as the Gospel has already been brought to the most remote corners of the earth. But here, too, God showed His care and mercy to all mankind, for He made it possible for almost everyone to hear about the Good News. No one can now reproach Him for not hearing anything about the Gospel. Today, more than ever, all believers need to watch and pray. As it's said, *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44).*

Can all this happen today or tomorrow? Yes, according to the last sign, it can happen any day and any minute. This coming will be triumphant. Jesus Christ clearly stated what His coming to earth would look like: *"For as the lightning comes from the east*

and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:27).

What a pity it is that today most of humanity lives as carelessly as people lived in the time of Noah. Moreover, it seems that people today seem to be going crazy. The desire of the majority, including believers, is focused on enrichment with material goods. People began to talk a lot about love, but at the same time they were completely unable to love others. Their ears are tuned only to sweet flattery, but they do not hear the main thing. Desire for earthly blessings today clouds the minds of many. People ask God for many things, but they get nothing. The Apostle James in his epistle very clearly expresses the cause of human troubles. He says: *"You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives more grace. Therefore, He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:2-10).*

The Apostle James gives very vivid instructions. He calls everything by the right name and clearly points out the shortcomings that take place among believers. Today, many Christians remain unanswered in their prayers, because they ask God not for good, but seeking to fulfill their own desires. The apostle openly calls such Christians doubleminded and advises to cleanse their hands and correct their hearts. Even more harshly, he calls them adulterers, thereby emphasizing their depravity and friendship with the world. In today's day, the picture of the life of many Christians is not much different than that of the first century, when the Apostle James denounced the believing people. Moreover, today many churches use faith in God as NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), through which people are turned into obedient slaves. For many church leaders, the interests of the world have become much higher than the interests of God. There is a lot of talk about God and love today, but in many ways, these are just beautiful words. The Lord Himself spoke about this through the prophet Isaiah: *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (Mark 7:6-7).*

Unfortunately, today in many churches the commandments of God are increasingly being replaced by the commandments of men, while interpreting the Holy Scriptures in a way that is beneficial for manipulation. The colors of the world captivate and carry away a significant number of Chris-

is true and whose is not. The Lord designated for everyone to be a part of only one true church — the Christian one, where only two commandments lie as a foundation: love God and your neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39). It is only by relying on this foundation that Christians can truly gain eternal life. Nothing brings you closer to God than the fulfillment of these two commandments.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:9-10).

"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. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he will dine with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:17-22).

I. GORIK.

Conscience. What is it? What is this intrusive voice that constantly disturbs us and judges our actions? If we open any explanatory dictionary, we will see that conscience is described there as the moral consciousness of a person, expressed in the assessment of our own and other people's actions and forcing us to make the right choice. I think a lot of people spent sleepless nights when the inner voice kept reminding us that we had done something wrong. Or vice versa: when you do something good, and inside everything seems to bloom. So, what makes us feel this way is called conscience. But have you ever wondered where such an inner moral judge suddenly came from in a sinful person? Where do we get this measure of our actions? This question has been pondered by the best minds throughout the existence of mankind. Whole schools and philosophical trends appeared. It has served as the theme for many outstanding works of art, including literature, music, and cinema. What can I say! Entire epochs in the development of mankind have been devoted to this high feeling.

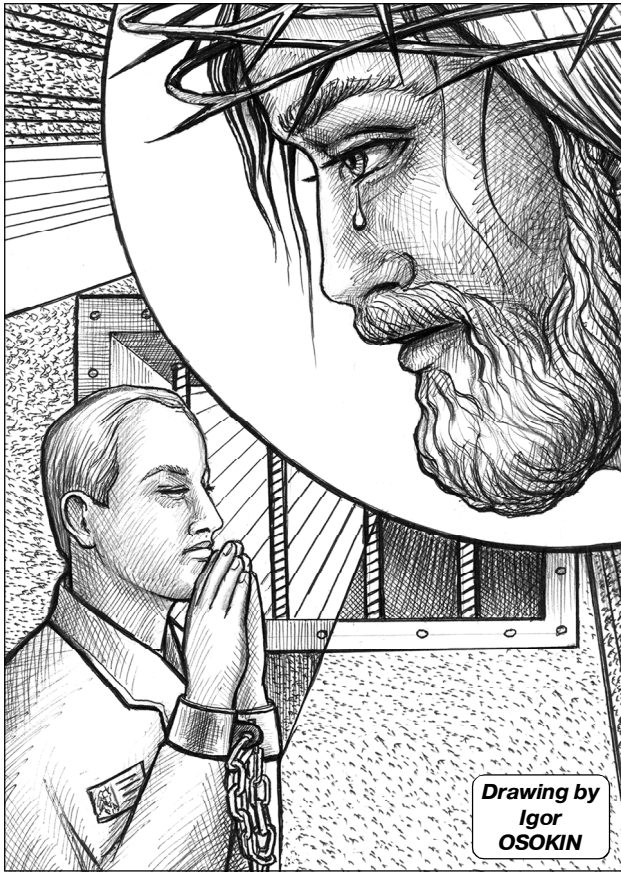
But all this was later, because, oddly enough, we find the answer in the Bible, in its very first book, Genesis. Conscience is a part of our Lord that we inherited when He created mankind in His image.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26).

Conscience is inherently present in every person. Therefore, even in the wildest tribe, people distinguish between good and evil. This point, by the way, was emphasized by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them (Rom. 2:14–15).*

The very first example of the workings of conscience described in the Bible is how Adam and Eve behaved when they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit: shame took possession of them, and they hid themselves from the Lord (Gen. 3:7–10). In the Bible, in general, there are many examples of conscience acting in people. This is seen in Cain's fear that he could be killed by the first comer, after he killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:14), and Joseph's refusal to commit the sin of adultery with Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:9), and the lament of King Saul when he learned that David, despite all persecution, had spared his life (1 Sam.

THE JUDGE WITHIN US



Drawing by
Igor
OSOKIN

26:5–25), and the repentance of David, who, being carried away by the beauty of Bathsheba, killed her husband by someone else's hands (Ps. 50), and the shame of the scribes and Pharisees who brought an adulterous woman to Christ when Jesus Christ said to them: *Whoever among you is without sin, be the first to throw a stone at her (John 8:3–11), and the uncomplaining removal of money changers from the temple when Jesus told them that the temple is not a place for trade (John 2:14–17), and many others. And the strongest remorse can even cause a person to commit suicide, as happened with Judas, who betrayed Jesus (Matt. 27:5).*

In the Bible, conscience is compared to many things, among which is the heart (1 John 3:20), and the eye (Matt. 6:22), and the rival (Matt. 5:25). The last comparison is particularly interesting.

Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand

you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison (Matt. 5:25).

After all no matter how much you tell yourself that you did well, you will not deceive your conscience. It does not obey us and will always speak white and black. There is no way to bribe it. Yes, you can try to drown it out, but this is fraught with loss of inner peace, various mental and physical illnesses. People who ignore the voice of conscience eventually become irritable and unbalanced. Therefore, it is better not to fight with conscience, but to live in peace.

Conscience is a kind of guardian of our heart, which helps us to resist every evil influence on the part of the enemy of human souls and his servants. After all, not all our thoughts are ours, no matter how strange it may sound. We are constantly influenced by the spiritual world. Our heart is a battlefield for spiritual forces. And it is conscience that shows us the right path. And the path we choose determines where we will spend eternity. The Lord has truly provided us with a miraculous guide, so to speak, an inner compass, which, despite the sin that struck all mankind, has not faded, but continues to help us.

But how do we know that the inner voice that we consider to be our conscience is not our delusion? After all, a person's conscience (no matter whether they are a believer or not) can be greatly influenced by their upbringing, environment, culture, traditions and many other factors. For example, parents instilled in someone in childhood that on Saturday you cannot do any business, such as cleaning or washing — a person now, if they want to do something on Saturday, will be condemned by their conscience. What can be done in this case?

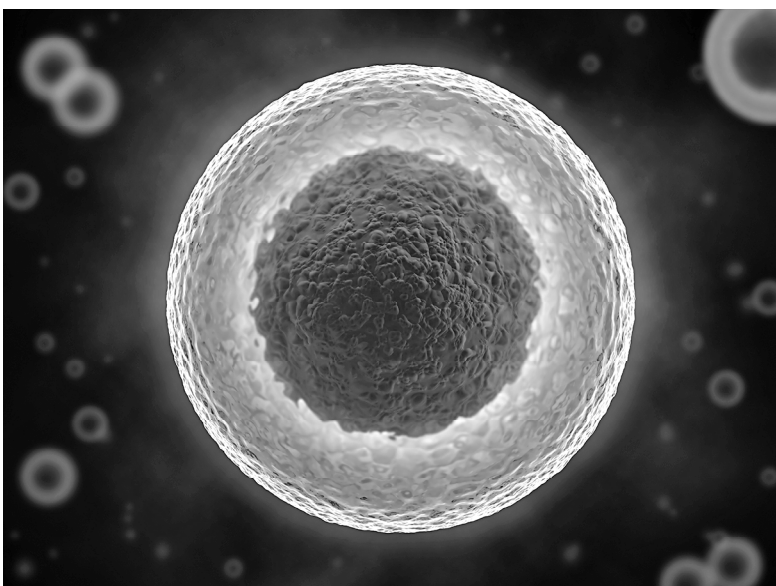
All the answers to our questions are in the Bible. By reading it, we not only become more familiar with our Lord, but also strengthen our faith and conscience. When we are filled with God's Word, we cleanse our consciences of all that is superficial, all that is human, and we are filled with God's truth. Today, unfortunately, many of us are more willing to believe what other people say, but Christians should look at everything only through the prism of the Holy Scriptures. It should become a benchmark for our conscience.

In conclusion, I would like to say that thanks to conscience a person is willing to repent and be reconciled with God. After the fall of our ancestors Adam and Eve, it is a good conscience that leads us back to our Savior. If it weren't for this spark of God in us, we wouldn't be able to distinguish between what is good and what is bad. And without this, repentance is impossible.

A. BURTSEV.

A SINGLE-CELLED IRONY

Many people have trouble accepting the miracle of Jesus' virginal conception.¹ It's often dismissed as a biological impossibility — a myth that belongs to a pre-scientific age. Ironically, however, many people who mock the virgin birth have no trouble accepting a similar miracle that, just like the virgin birth, life begins with a single cell.



Materialists scoff at the idea that the first embryonic cell of Jesus arose miraculously, but they accept that the first living cell arose "spontaneously"

LIFE BEGINS WITH A SINGLE CELL

The New Testament implies that Jesus had a normal gestation time (9 months). Therefore, it's reasonable to assume that, just like you and me, Jesus began His embryonic development as a single cell. Normally, the first cell is formed when egg meets sperm. This first cell contains the entire human genome — one set of chromosomes from each parent. But since Jesus didn't have a human father, miraculous intervention was required to bring about this first cell.

People who reject the virgin birth

essentially have a problem with the appearance of this first cell. The rest of the nine-month process is generally not regarded as miraculous, because it takes place millions of times all over the world each year.

EVOLUTION BEGINS WITH A SINGLE CELL

The origin of the first cell is also critically important in evolutionary biology. I remember one of my university lecturers telling us that cells only come from other cells — but then he quickly corrected himself: *except, of course, for*

the first cell. According to evolutionary reckoning, all life can be traced back to a single cell, which itself arose from non-living chemicals. But since the simplest cell we know of is horrendously complex, this leaves evolutionists with the unenviable task of explaining how such complexity could arise by chance alone.

Many scientists have acknowledged the magnitude of this problem. For example, *New York Times* science writer Nicholas Wade confessed: *The chemistry of the first life is a nightmare to explain.* But perhaps the most startling assessment of the problem was given by Francis Crick, the man who won the Nobel Prize for co-discovering the structure of DNA. He surmised: *An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going [emphasis added].* So even the self-proclaimed atheist Francis Crick thinks it's appropriate to use the word *miracle* (albeit reluctantly) to describe the appearance of the first living cell.

Maybe atheists have more in common with Christians than they like to admit. While many scoff at the idea that the first embryonic cell of Jesus arose miraculously, they have no trouble accepting that the first living cell (which supposedly gave rise to all living things) arose *miraculously*. This is indeed a single-celled irony.

David WHITE,
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PROVERB

Everything is in your hands

Once upon a time there lived a seer. People from all over the neighborhood and even from other cities came to him for advice. And none of them left inconsolable. The fame of his wisdom spread throughout the country.

One envious person heard about it, envied the seer and thought: "Let me laugh at him!"



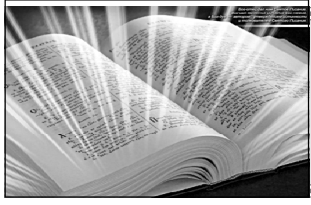
This man caught a butterfly, put it between his closed palms and went to the seer. He thought to himself: "I will ask him is the butterfly dead or alive? If he says that she is alive, I will squeeze her in my hand. If he says she's dead, I'll let her out". The man came to the seer and said: "Everything is visible to you, everything is open. Tell me, did I bring you a dead butterfly or a live one?"

The seer looked at him and said: "Everything is in your hands".

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PASTOR'S WORD

JUSTICE



INDIVIDUAL FEELING OF JUSTICE

Justice is a balanced inner sense of understanding of good and evil, applied to all people evenly, without partiality.

Justice is the conformity of an action with its consequences. Example: salary should correspond to the quality and quantity of work, punishment — the severity of the crime, reward — achievements.

Justice is an essential feature of a moral and legal society. The law is designed to delineate and regulate fair relations between members of society.

There was a period in Israel when it did not have a chief executive, there was no rule of law, and everyone did what he thought was right. It was a difficult period in history, marked by the heyday of lawlessness and impunity.

Judges 17:6 — *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

Nevertheless, there are generally accepted concepts of justice that are inherent in every person and to which the Bible refers. Here is one of those scriptures:

Ephesians 6:1 — *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

There is a lack of fair people in the world. Everyone wants to have fair leaders above them, starting from the president of the country and ending with the immediate supervisor at work. Everyone realizes how important it is for judges in the country to be incorruptible and fair. Even criminals and thieves try to do justice to each other. We all want everything that concerns us to be fair.

It is important to ask ourselves; are we fair to other people, especially to those who are below us in a position? Are we fair to our children? Are we fair to other people in material things? What about buying and selling? Are we fair in judging ourselves or in analyzing our actions? Or is it easier for us to judge others, and when it concerns ourselves, we quickly turn from judges into lawyers?

DIFFERENCES IN CONCEPTS OF JUSTICE

Even the fairest decision to different people may not be seen equally fair. And not only due to ignorance of all the circumstances or motives that led to such a decision, but also depending on the personal characteristics, opinions, experience, and state of conscience of everyone. There is a saying that goes like this: "The number of people, the number of opinions". Which means; different people may have different assessments of fairness. Even the Bible says that people's assessment of truth and justice may differ from God's. In one case, the Lord tells His people that their truth is reprehensible, and He will show the people the essence of this truth, and this will not be to their advantage. Why? Because his truth does not match God's.

Isaiah 57:12 — *I will declare your righteousness and your works, for they will not profit you.*

The assessment of justice depends on the environment of upbringing and the state of conscience. Conscience is a mechanism expressed in a sense of moral responsibility for one's behavior before God, oneself, surrounding people, and society. The Bible names eight different states of conscience. Cleansing and improvement of conscience occurs when reading or listening to the Word of God and the action of the Holy Spirit. In close communion with God and reading the Bible, the human conscience is tuned to God's standard, which will be applied

in the eternal judgment. After all, according to Christ, this world will be judged.

John 12:48 — *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

IS EVERYTHING WITH GOD BUILT ONLY FOR JUSTICE?

The Judgment of God is the most just place in the universe where justice is affirmed, but even there, according to the Word of God, there can be a deviation from its principles towards mercy to those who themselves showed mercy to others! What does it say? That God is not fair? Or, rather, that justice is only one of the attributes of God, along with which He has other, no less important virtues. Understanding this should help us in our own lives.

James 2:13 — *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

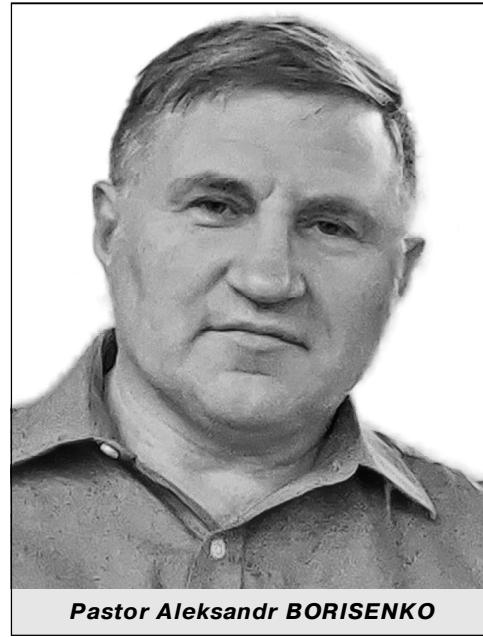
Something similar in relationships with people, and especially when building a family. It is impossible to arrange a family only on the principles of justice. Many things are not fair in the full sense of the word, but we live with it. For example, when parents work hard for twenty to twenty-five years to feed, clothe, teach and raise their children, while their children study, rest and until a certain time do not realize the magnitude of parental sacrifice for them. And who can measure the role of the mother in the family? Who else can compare with the diligence and sacrifice of a loving mother who, regardless of anything, devotes herself day and night to her family, receiving nothing in return? Is it fair? At first glance, no, but that's the way it is. Of course, in the end, the happiness of parents who raised beautiful children compensates for all the work and costs, if we look to the future. But this is not visible at the beginning, when life is full of hard work and worries.

Just as there are no two identical leaves on a tree, just as there are no two identical snowflakes in the world, so every person on earth is created unique and unrepeatable. Men and women are created by God to be completely different not only physically, but also in the field of thinking. Men tend to be more logical thinking, while women are sensual-emotional. The combination of these features enriches the mutual respect of the spouses for each other. Both husband and wife should know and remember that it is natural not to understand each other in certain areas, but this should not paralyze their family functions. Trust and love for each other cover this apparent lack. And the desire to remake a spouse in their own way sometimes makes both unhappy.

To show Christians their different positions in the Church (in the Body of Christ) and the consequences of this misunderstanding, the apostle Paul gives the example of the human body, which consists of many members with different purposes.

1 Corinthians 12:13-25 — *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body", is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body", is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now*

God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you". No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed



Pastor Aleksandr BORISENKO

the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

This comparison with the body of Christ and the different purposes of its individual members is given so that we understand that each individual person has their own purpose in accordance with the features laid down by our Creator in each person during his creation.

It is important to know that differences of opinion are a natural phenomenon, both in the church and in the family. Diversity is the result of our features and the presence of free will. They should not paralyze the normal functions of the family or the collective, since the subordination, or order of subordination, established by God, does not change depending on different points of view. **People are not obliged to share your opinion, even if it is the most correct one.**

Having different opinions, tastes and views is normal, but it is unfair to deprive or start persecution for the right to have an opinion. Let others have the right to make mistakes because you also made mistakes.

Romans 14:19 — *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

FEELINGS OF INJUSTICE WHEN IT AFFECTS US

It is good when a person, seeing an unfair attitude towards someone, stands up for the offended. But it often happens that people are completely indifferent to the manifestation of injustice against other people, but they cannot tolerate it against themselves. Their self-esteem is so great that they are indignant even when they see at least some small hint of injustice against them. This heightened sense of justice sometimes makes their communication with other people impossibly difficult. Just as a light touch on a wound causes pain and discomfort in a person, so it does in these people. It's hard to tell where they don't have a wound. All people

may seem to them unfair and not appreciating them. These are also found among Christians. Many of them consider this intolerance of injustice to themselves as a special advantage or righteousness and explain their intemperance by the fact that they cannot tolerate injustice. But in fact, the cause of their indignation is their I, that is, their sinful, unpurified nature. Watching this category of people in life, it is difficult to say that their reaction to injustice is creative and constructive. Basically, everything happens the other way around: instead of being useful, their relationships with other people cause a lot of pain, resentment, and hostility. In matters of justice, we must be strict with ourselves, but merciful with others.

Proverbs 17:9 — *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.*

Colossians 3:13 — *...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

HOW IT SHOULD BE

Jesus Christ had the character of a humble man and taught His followers not to fight for their own flesh.

Matthew 5:39-41 — *But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*

Why did Christ teach like this? The first thing you need to pay attention to is that He taught us to endure injustice only in relation to oneself, but not in relation to other people. We can and should stand up for others if we see a clear injustice. By enduring injustice towards himself, a person achieves perfection. At the same time, his selfishness, unhealthy ambitions are burned, and going through such periods in life, a Christian comes out spiritually cleansed and matured.

We live and communicate with people with unequal conscience and level of spiritual development. There are people who, at the slightest, as it seems to them, injustice, arrange an argument. Well, if it turned out to be a pedestrian on the street, whom you met once in your life! But if with such a person you live under the same roof? If you are sick of constantly hearing evidence of his being, right? How then to be?

It is necessary to remain calm and bear this person with a personal example of meekness and patience. Seeing a good example, sooner or later the disputant will be ashamed of his behavior and will begin to change himself. In such cases, it is important that at least one party is in close relationship with God and the Holy Spirit can work through it. It is also important to remember that we have the right to waive all of our rights. That is, not to find out and not to demand our own even when we are accused of what we are completely innocent of. This is unbearably difficult for a carnal (non-spiritual) person, but as spiritual growth progresses, it is well tolerated.

CONCLUSION

God is pleased when we are just and honest towards people and ourselves.

Our understanding of justice may differ from God's, but through hearing the Word of God and getting close to Him, it aligns with God's standard.

Justice is not the only quality that God has. His children also, in addition to the correct concepts of justice, should have generosity, compassion and mercy towards other people. Be strict with yourself, but kind to others. God's love encompasses all of the above.

Colossians 3:14 — *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

GOD SHARES HIS GLORY WITH US

KONSTANTIN

I remember my childhood with a bottle of wine and a cigarette in my hands. An entrance near the house, a guitar and a sharp change in my character not for the better, a youngster, a penal colony, drug treatment, then a strict regime, and so on. Seventeen years in the prisons of Ukraine, four convictions, twenty years of drug use.

In addition, they shot at me and even buried me. Once, in a Nikopol brothel, half-dressed, they carried me out into the street and laid me near a neighboring house, since I was already without a pulse. As a result, a stroke paralyzed left side, and since I was wanted, I again ended up in prison — no family, no children, no teeth.

At that time, I thought that prison was my home. I even liked being there, I could always get myself drugs. At this time I learned that my mother who believed in God, helped and came to see me as long as she could later became paralyzed. And then the Lord found me. Desperate and devastated, in the place that I began to consider my home, in correctional colony No. 6 of Kirovograd (now Kropyvnytskyi). People came who sincerely believed in the mercy and love of God and spoke of his love. I repented, I was tired of being evil and being a slave to drugs. The believers prayed for me and for my mother, I saw tears in their eyes, and it touched my heart. Then they asked permission to go see my family.

I was very surprised that people who weren't close to me were eager to travel three hundred kilometers to Ordzhonikidze (now Pokrov) for the sake of my relatives, so that they too would learn about Jesus. My relatives also gave their lives to God.

The big changes began to happen in my life as God began to change the way I was thinking. I began to pray with others for our leaders and for daily needs. I saw

Lord leading us and it felt great. For the first time in my life, I was introduced to a colony-settlement, from which I was released on parole. God continued to perform his miracles in my life. I came out of prison under parole supervision, but by the grace of God, it was removed ahead of schedule.

I began to serve in the church, and began to travel around the prisons of the Kirovograd region as part of a team of prison ministers. I spoke to former colleagues about what God did in my life and how He was able to change the life of a former drug addict with experience.

In the church I met a girl named Tanya. After a while, God united us in marriage and gave me real sincere love and a family that is growing and getting stronger. We have two adult daughters — Katya and Dasha, and a son, Danny.

Last year my mother went to heaven. I am so grateful for her care and support during the most difficult time of my life.

In Ordzhonikidze, the Lord formed a church branch and my family was called to serve him there. I am a pastor and I see God's hand and mercy in my life, my family and people who like us sincerely accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Dear reader, now that I can live with joy and enjoy being in his presence, experiencing God's power and glory to the fullest. God showed me that when I was dying in the winter on a bench with no pulse, he was there. And I am sure that he saved me and didn't let death take me to hell. He gave me a chance to change my life, and I'm grateful to him that I took it. After everything that I've been through, it's easier for me to understand others, and show love and mercy to them. I can with confidence say this words from

Bible: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes (Psalms 119:71).*

TATIANA

I was born in a good family, where I was brought up in love and prosperity. I studied well in school, and graduated from a

of sin overwhelmed me. When Katya was ten years old, and Dasha was one, I was in such a state that I could not even look after myself. My parents stepped in and took the children. After a while, I was so broken and destroyed by the bondage of sin that I tried to kill myself. I began to look for a way to end my life and the situation in which I found myself.

My mother is a doctor by profession, so I tried to find out from her about some kind of poison. But when I spoke to her about this, she told me about a daughter of a woman who was a drug addict and whom the Lord had miraculously saved. This girl was freed from drug addiction, quit smoking and swearing. I could not believe it, but my eldest daughter suggested that I go to this church and see for myself. During the service, I laughed all the time, seeing how believers behaved, and the way they acted was very unusual to me: they sang, danced and rejoiced. I liked the sermon, because I never understood the meaning of the Bible, but here passages from Scripture were revealed in an accessible way.

When the pastor began to call for repentance, my daughter took my hand and led me to the stage. I did not understand what was happening to me, but after pastor I repeated prayer of repentance. My daughter Katyusha asked to pray to release me from drugs. When we got home, I had a smile on my face. God saw my situation and helped me so that the next morning I felt completely free from drug addiction.

Half a year of rich Christian life has passed. My parents did not realize that it was God who gave me strength not to inject. They thought that it was I who had the willpower and that I didn't have

to go to church so often. I listened to them and after that I fell: not only did I begin to use drugs... I was sent for three years in prison. After a year and seven months of imprisonment, the time came for parole, and I remembered God. I understood that I really needed spiritual support, and I asked my daughter Katyusha to pray for me. I also prayed myself and the Lord heard me, but when I was released, I did not return to God's family. My mother asked me to return to church, and I answered to her: go yourself.

A year and a half later I again ended up in prison for a year and a half. When I entered the cell, I went to the barred window and made a promise to God to be faithful to him even in prison and God heard me. I saw many miracles, when people repented and were healed. After serving ten months, I was released early. Even when I was in prison, God told me that I would have a son and I should name him Daniel. I was very surprised, since my first marriage was completely destroyed I considered myself already old. But, remembering my promise, I completely entrusted my life to God, and he has changed it in a wonderful way. When I again began to serve Him and Christianity became the way of my life, a very dear person from the Lord appeared in my life and the life of my daughters, my beloved husband Kostya.

We are very happy, and now even my parents agreed that there is a God. As He promised, we had a son whom we named Daniel. Our daughters serve the Lord, and we see how God leads them and arranges their destinies.

My husband and I serve in the church in Ordzhonikidze. God gave us the wisdom and finances to start our own business, which makes it possible to serve Lord, and not worry about food and housing. I know exactly what joy is. I experience it every day of my life. Today I can with confidence declare: together with God I am a very blessed person!

Konstantin and Tatiana YAN, Ukraine, <http://gazetasp.net>



From homelessness to a successful happy person

I have been a member of the church for over two years now. I am a joyful person now: I have a wonderful loving wife and two wonderful children, friends, work, and ministry in the church. I am also a drummer in the worship group. My Lord gave me the talent of a music, and I am trying to improve it more and more.

But it was not always so. My problems started from the moment I was born. The doctors gave up on me and said that I wasn't going to live. And only through prayers of my mother and grandmother I survived. Despite this, before giving my life to Christ, I managed to get in a lot of trouble.

As a child, I was very active, I was doing sports: wrestling and karate. After I came from serving in army, I demonstrated my athletic skills in negative ways: gangs, racketeering, and so on. Life was in full swing and I was being prideful. I sold my apartment to start a business and it all failed. I got in debt. The rest of the money dispersed quickly as well.

In 1996, my mother died, and in 1997, my brother got in the car accident. Blow after blow, I found myself refuge in alcohol. At that time I already had a family, a little daughter who was growing up. My wife could not stand my binges anymore, so she took the child and left. I was even more immersed in booze and rolled down to a bum. During the day I worked as a loader in the market, and in the evening I received

payment — and was in the restaurant until four in the morning. When this establishment closed, I asked to get some sleep for at least a couple of hours in the parking lot — they would let me in for a bottle of vodka. That's how three years of my life went by.

One time there, in a restaurant, a believer spoke to me. He claimed that God loves me and can help me. I was already pretty drunk, but I listened and somehow mumbled a prayer of repentance: I repented that I was a sinner, and asked Jesus to enter my heart to become my Lord, help me get out of the swamp in which I was in for a long time.

This was in 2004. And for two long years I myself tried to change something in my life. I continued to drink, but not that often. I began to think more about God and about Satan, I remembered what that believer had once said to me, and even once I said: *Lord, if you exist, help me change my life.*

In 2006 after another hangover I didn't want to live like this anymore. I went jogging to get rid of my hangover (I did that sometimes). And when I was jogging, a clear voice inside my head said: *Do you want to run? Run to church.* I listened and ran. There I met with a minister. I told him everything that happened. He patiently listened, spoke with me, and prayed about me. From that point on I stayed there. I would go there whenever I was free, trying



to be useful by helping to improve the territory, etc. I asked God to shield me from the world, keep me busy and surround me with believers so that I could resist when temptations would come, and they did.

God was faithful: I received what I asked him for. I prayed for myself, for my wife and daughter. Thanks to God she didn't divorce me. I began to look for a way to improve my relationship with my family. I told them that the Lord had freed me from addictions. After all, my wife and daughter were the dearest people in my

life. I asked her for forgiveness for all the pain I have caused her. I praise God, that not right away she gave me a chance.

A year has passed, and one day our acquaintances told me that my wife answered *I live in paradise* to a question *How are you?* I praise my Lord from the bottom of my heart for such an undeserved gift. I love my daughter very much, but in my heart, for 8 years, I wanted a son. And this dream came true: my wife gave me a wonderful son, Danilushka.

So this is my path from a homeless person to a successful and a happy family man. And for all the glory to my Father, Friend and Mentor — the Lord Jesus Christ! Many thanks to the brothers in Christ who helped and stood by me, supported me in prayed that the Lord would restore me.

Dear friend, maybe you are on the sidelines in this life, as I once was. Do not despair: the Lord Jesus is able to bring you out of any terrible situations, even if it seems hopeless to you. Listen to your heart and make that change immediately. I told many of my old friends that God wants to transform their lives. Some listened, others did not, and many are no longer alive. God always gives a person a chance, take advantage of it. God has a plan for you he can give you healing, deliverance, restoration — everything you need. The choice is yours.

Sergey YUKHIMENKO, Ukraine, <http://gazetasp.net>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

THE MAIN THING IS TO WANT TO LIVE

My life has long been put to an end. Yes, I considered my life meaningless. Tormented by alcohol and strange voices, I saw only one way out for myself and that would be through death. But does Christ, who died for people, say they are done with?

Relationship to money is sometimes evil. This was observed some time ago by Agur, asking God: *Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God (Proverbs 30:8–9).*

The sudden wealth that came to me after a bleak childhood ruined me.

I was born in a Kazakh-Russian family in Russia. When I was four months old, my family moved to Kharkov, Ukraine. When I was four years old, my mother died. After her death, I was raised by my grandmother and step-grandfather, who lived in Kharkov. Grandfather who made for himself sixty-degree moonshine, often mocked me. But the worst thing is that, taking an example from my grandfather, I gradually began to abuse alcohol myself...

After serving in the army, I returned to Kharkov. I started a family, got a job at a factory, where I received about three hundred and twenty Soviet rubles a month.

But then one day I met a friend where I once worked. The buddy says: *I work in a building cooperative and receive five hundred rubles a month. Come and work with me.*

In the cooperative they took me to work as a bricklayer and paid nine hundred rubles a month, which in those years was an impressive amount of money. Now, having such money, I began to drink with the construction crew. But my financial growth did not end there. Together with my partner I bought a lottery ticket. It turned out to be a winning one: the prize was a car called Lada model nine. I thought: why should I need a car? This is what you need to stop drinking. If there is a need for a ride, I'll just call a taxi. We were offered to sell the winning ticket for one hundred twenty-five thousand rubles. And we agreed.

After that I didn't even know what to do with the money. However, I soon found what to do with it, spending it on more on alcohol. My wife could not stand it and left me, taking our son with her. Our marriage fell apart. From 1994–2002 was the period of casual connections, building long-term relations with women failed. Until I met Irina.

The most interesting thing is that we lived next to each other all our lives side by side, in the

same five-story building. She had apartment number 20, mine was number 23. And now, many years later, we drew attention to each other and began to live together. Soon our daughter Masha was born. But the acquired family hearth did not stop me from drinking. I couldn't stop drinking anymore. Then I had the idea to sell Irina's apartment and buy a house in the village. Maybe a new life will begin there, so I thought.

The apartment was being sold for a long time and not without some incidents. I initiated or proposed such an idea. The sale had to be dealt with by Irina, who, by the way, was a disabled person with the thyroid gland problem and she herself needed care and help. The person who volunteered to help buy a house was my wife's sister with her husband. In 2004, Irina bought a house in the village of Artyukhovka (Kharkov region).

But even living in a quiet village, I did not stop drinking. I couldn't practically work in this condition. Problems were added by the husband of Irina's sister, who began to bring drug addicts to our house. I decided to go back to Kharkov. But not for long. In 2006, my family and I finally moved to Artyukhovka. Then the husband of Irina's sister, who, as it turned out, had a drug business called the police on me. It turned out that someone was growing weed around my house. A criminal case was initiated against me, but all the evidence pointed to my non-involvement in its cultivation. The police told me that they would transfer this case to Irina as the official owner of the house, and our daughter Masha would be given to an orphanage.

I had to take all the blame. They gave me three years of probation. I had to report to the police from time to time, but I could still live at home. Alcohol dependence did not pass. Realizing that I was living an abnormal life, I began to persuade Irina to leave me. I even deliberately acted in such a way so that she would hate me. But my loving wife endured all the insults. It so happened that Irina used a wheelchair through the whole village, accompanied by a neighborly laughter, and would bring me home drunk. She has always been by my side. Otherwise, I immediately would have tried to commit suicide. Life was becoming more unbearable.

Since 2005, in moments of sobriety, I began to hear strange voices that laughed at me, sometimes humiliated me, sometimes encouraged me to terrible actions.

A voice once said to me: *We will come, tie you all up and rape your two-year-old daughter in*

front of your eyes. That's why it is better that you strangle her so she wouldn't have to suffer.

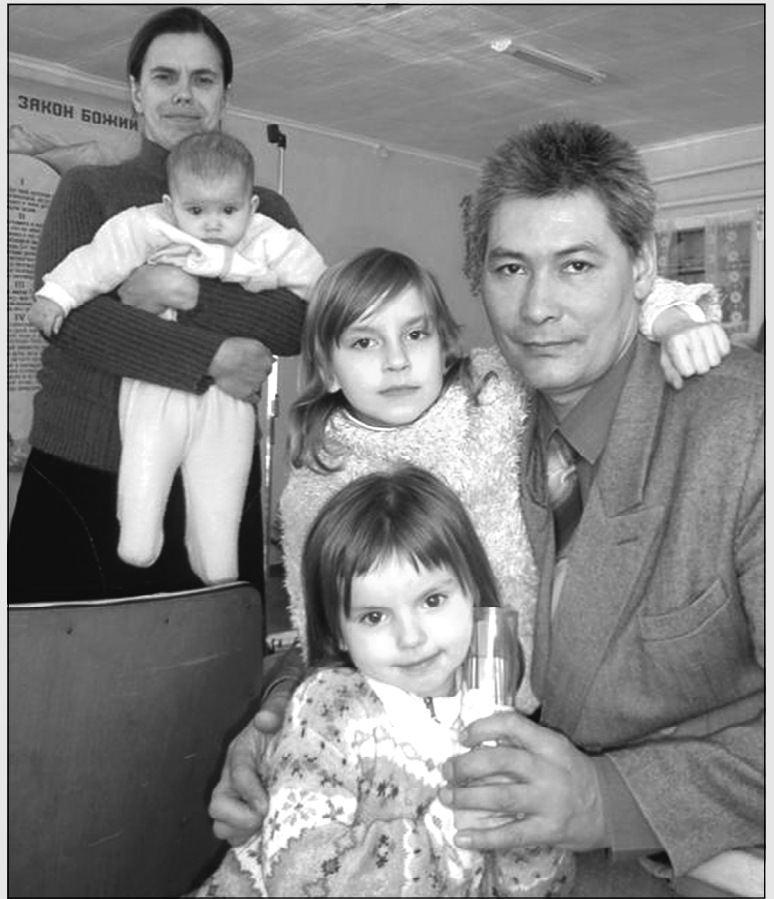
This terrible voice was repeated many times. I, unable to bear it I really started to choke my daughter. But suddenly I saw a maliciously laughing image of satan. It stopped me. Thank God, I did not have time to fulfill the devil's order. Demonic voices, alcohol, poverty — all this turned my life into a nightmare, from which I couldn't wake up. I saw the only way out of this was through suicide. Thousands of pills, fly agaric, blades, knives, ropes — I tried many ways to kill myself, but nothing worked for me. Some kind of power seemed to protect me from death.

Coming out of the hospital, where I was lying after another attempt to commit suicide, I wandered the whole day in the city of Kharkov. Already at night I reached the Horse Market. I had the idea in my head to throw myself down from the ninth floor. Therefore, I went to the entrance of the first nine-story building that came across, randomly dialed a code and the door opened. I went up to the ninth floor, and another thought arose in my head: how many times have you tried this, and it didn't work out. It won't work this time either. You will remain crippled. And Ira will look after you, a cripple, all her life.

In 2006, Irina met believers. The husband of the Christian woman studied how to code. He suggested that I go to Kharkov to see a more proficient coder. But he set a condition not to drink the week before. I survived this deadline, and on the initiator's paid travel (I didn't have my own funds at that time). And Irina at that moment, attended church and prayed fervently for me. It was on New Year's Eve.

The coding itself took about two seconds (or seemed like it). And it was preceded by a story about Jesus Christ and about the need to accept Him into my heart. As a result, I celebrated the New Year in my village sober.

Christian women began to conduct Bible lessons for Irina at her home. It was interesting to listen to them through the wall, but I did not dare to approach them. When the believers left, I even explained to my wife what she did not understand from the lesson. Soon Irina decided to be baptized. But for this she had to sign the marriage papers with me. Previously, we tried many times to get to the registry office, but I always went there drunk, and the wedding, of course, when the groom is in such a condition, could not take place. But finally, we officially became husband and wife. We signed the papers on Friday, and on Saturday Irina was baptized. On Saturday evening a festive feast was held



in the prayer house. Meanwhile, Irina and I were already expecting a second child. After baptism, Irina changed a lot. She began to smile more often, treat me warmer and nicer. All of this had an impact on me.

But suddenly I began to hear voices again, which, it would seem, had already ceased. I worked for a dairy company and constantly secretly took some dairy products home for my family. And an internal voice began to tell me: *You can't steal!* Of course, it was already a voice of a different nature. It was the voice from God. Soon I wrote a letter of resignation. In the column reason, I indicated: *I cannot work on Saturday.* Although I didn't think about baptism then, I didn't want to break what I thought was a commandment of God.

At the end of 2007, Daniel Reband's evangelistic program took place in Kharkov. The wife of the same man who took me to the Kharkov coder suggested that I should listen to the sermons. And I started coming to them. Immediately after the end of the program, a week before the New Year, I firmly decided to be baptized. Now the desire to drink alcoholic beverages had completely disappeared from me. It was God who delivered me from the terrible alcohol dependence.

The demonic voices were gone. Gradually my life recovered. My wife and I were born a third child, and this was another miracle from God. After all, doctors generally forbade her to give birth in the future, because she had a second degree of non-working

disability. But to the surprise of the medical staff, today we already have three kids. A miracle also happened with my wife's disability. The doctors were going to completely remove her disability status, because they no longer see any grounds for it. The loving Lord healed her.

Today I have a wonderful family, I work as a builder, and do missionary work. Understanding the complexity of alcohol addiction, I let in a man into my house whose wife kicked him out because of his drinking. Now he does not drink, already is baptized and after long communication with me and the completion of missionary courses in Novomoskovsk, he himself became a missionary.

In addition, I actively distribute Christian literature in Artyukhovka. And I am taking courses in Kharkov to become a pastor in my church very soon. Now, I am often asked for advice, a person who was once given up on as a fallen and perished person himself.

Chemical dependence, including alcoholic, are today one of the biggest problems in Ukrainian society. But there is hope for the addicts and their families. This hope is in Jesus Christ.

To get rid of such an addiction, the main thing is to want to live, to live normally. Unless the person himself wants it, it will all be useless. It is important to pray for such a person so that he will have a great desire to live differently.

Sergey ASMAGAMBETOV, Ukraine, www.asd.in.ua

CHRISTIAN NEWS

More deaths from faith-healing recorded in Idaho as advocates fight to end practice

Activists in Idaho are continuing their push to repeal or amend laws that protect parents from prosecution when they allow their children to die from preventable illnesses by denying them medical care and relying exclusively on prayer and spiritual healing.

On January 11, 2023, a panel discussion organized by The Campaign To Protect Idaho Kids, a nonprofit organization, said more than 200 children in Idaho have died of preventable illnesses and diseases since a 1972 state law began allowing parents with religious objections to medical treatment to have the legal

right to let their children die from medically preventable illnesses.

Idaho is one of six states in the U.S. where religious exemptions are allowed for negligent homicide, manslaughter or capital murder. Since 2014, activists against faith healing have lobbied the Idaho Legislature to change the law but haven't gotten much support due to concerns about parental rights and religious and medical freedom, the Idaho Statesman reported.

Activists like retired Idaho Supreme Court justice and former Idaho Attorney General Jim Jones said the exemption needs to be

amended or repealed. The Committee to Protect and Preserve the Idaho Constitution, where he serves as a member, is prepared to mount a legal challenge against it to prevent more children from dying.

I have looked at doing the same for the faith healing exemption. We may well do it and take it to court, but it would be so much easier if public policy was directed by the Legislature and they just repealed the exemption, Jones said, according to the Idaho Capital Sun. *It has resulted in the deaths of many children.*

The Followers of Christ church, an infamous religious group that

shuns western medical practices and embraces only healing by the power of prayer, have been accused of allowing children to die from preventable deaths. The causes of death range from food poisoning and diabetes to pneumonia and heart defects.

Linda Martin, a former member of the church, told the Idaho Statesman that she witnessed family members die because of the church's beliefs.

Martin, who is now 68 and lives in Oregon, left the church when she was 16, but still monitors deaths connected to the church.

Coroner's reports reviewed by the Idaho Statesman *showed eight child deaths, including stillbirths, associated with faith healing since the start of 2020 in Canyon County, where the Followers of Christ's largest church group is located,* the publication said.

Another report by the publication in February 2020 found 11 faith-healing deaths in the same county during the previous five years.

How many people are willing to sit back and say, "This doesn't affect me"? Martin told the Statesman. *When you see that kids are hurting, how do you step away when you can help?*

The Christian Post.

Adam and Eve – were they Jews?

When God created Adam and Eve, they had no nationality. Modern nationalities and different nationalities were formed after the Flood and descended from the sons of Noah: Ham, Shem and Japheth. Adam and Eve are the ancestors not only of the Jews, but also of all other peoples.

The Bible says that from Adam and Eve came all the peoples that inhabit the earth. But as it is known that each nation has its own name and its own history. Jews, like Arabs, are descended from Abraham, who was neither Arab nor Jew by nationality. Abraham was a Chaldean and was from Ur of the Chaldeans: **Genesis 11:31** — *And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan...*

The history of the Jewish people begins in Ur of the Chaldeans in about 366 after the Flood, when God called Abraham to go to the Promised Land. But Jews are not simply the descendants of Abraham, but the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — who received the name Israel from God (theomachist). The name Jew itself comes from the word Ivrey (or Ibri), which Hebrew language translated as a stranger, wanderer, traveler. So Abram was called a despicable nickname for the Canaanites during his wanderings in Canaan: **Genesis 14:13** — *Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram.*

As a nation, the Jewish people was formed much later (after approximately 400 years) — while living in Egypt: *And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: "My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders" (Deuteronomy 26:5-8).*

How should we understand Jesus' words in Luke 14:26

Luke 14:26 — *If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Some argue that the gospel preaches hatred. But this is deeply misleading. The teaching of Jesus Christ is the teaching of love. The following places testify to this.*

Matthew 5:43-44 — *You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you".*

Matthew 22:37-39 — *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself".*

John 13:34-35 — *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

John 15:17 — *These things I command you, that you love one another.*

The Bible is replete with similar verses. How then are we to understand the passage from **Luke 14:26**? Do these verses mean Jesus' call to hate?

In no case or by no means! And let's find out why. God cannot contradict Himself and His laws. Jesus could not call to hate your parents, because that would be contrary to the fifth commandment, which goes like this: *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12).*

Jesus Himself quoted this commandment in response to a question from one of the Jewish leaders, who asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery', 'Do not murder', 'Do not steal', 'Do not bear false witness', 'Honor your father and your mother'" (**Luke 18:18-20**).

But if Jesus did not mean that we should hate our relatives, then what did He mean?

Let's read the words of Jesus again carefully: *...if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even himself his life, he cannot be My disciple...*

The Lord speaks about who can be His true disciples. And the solution is not to hate your family members and your own life, but to put Jesus first in your life. Jesus makes it clear that if a person does not put Jesus first in his life, then he cannot be His disciple; if someone does not have Christ in the first place, but his parents, or wife/husband, or children, or their own interests and aspirations, then he cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Remember the first and second commandments from the Law: Honor God and serve Him alone and do not make yourself an idol. In them, God says the same thing. The Lord wants to be **first** in our life in everything.

If we call ourselves His disciples, but when it comes to making some decisions, if we think of ourselves first, or of our family, or of our friends, instead of giving priority to Jesus in any given situation, then we do not act as His disciples.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



There were twelve apostles. Why are only four gospels included in the Bible?

Let's start with the fact that there were more than twelve apostles. For example, Barnabas and Paul were apostles. **Acts 14:14** — *But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes...*

Romans 1:1 — *Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God... James, the brother of Jesus Christ by mother, was also an apostle.*

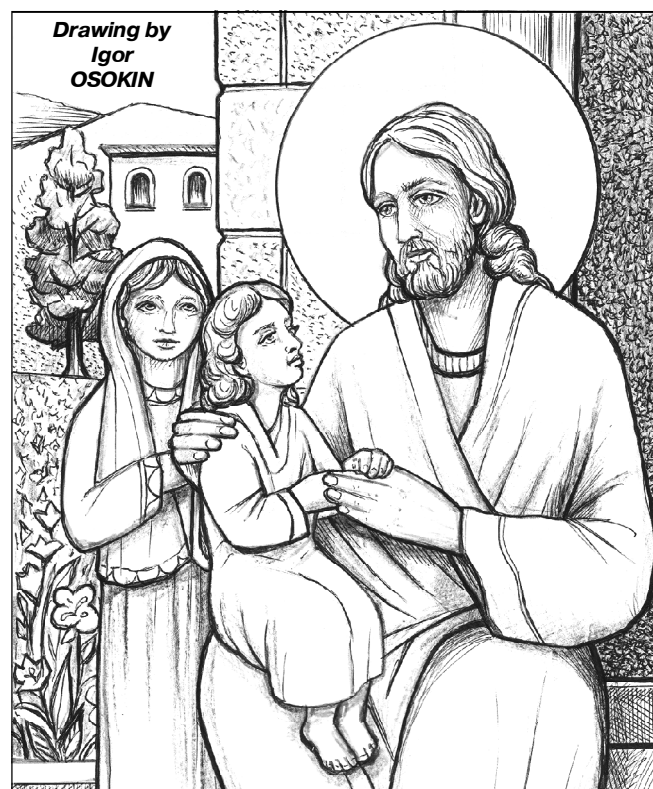
Galatians 1:19 — *But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

Brother Jude was also an apostle of Jesus Christ who wrote the Epistle of Jude. The fact is that the title of an apostle is like the title of a missionary. Translated from the Greek word apostle means messenger, or a person sent with/on a mission. Apostles are believers in Jesus Christ, who, by the inclination of the heart and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, testify to unbelievers of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, plant new churches and raise ministers for churches of God. That is why there were many more apostles than just twelve.

And since there were apostles, there were also false apostles, about whom the apostle Paul warned in **2 Corinthians 11:13**: *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. False apostles were false teachers who pretended to be apostles or missionaries and messengers of God.*

As for the twelve, the twelve apostles are traditionally considered as twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, whom He personally chose for the apostolic ministry even before His crucifixion. Moreover, the apostle Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot (**Acts 1:15-26**). **Now back to the question as to why did only four gospels make it into the Bible, even though there were twelve apostles?**

It is interesting to note that the evangelists Luke and Mark were not among the twelve apostles and, therefore, not four, but only two gospels written by the apostles (Matthew and John, who belonged to the twelve apostles) became part of the New Testament. Why not Gospels written by other close disciples of Jesus Christ?



The Gospel of Luke begins with these words: *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed (Luke 1:1-4).*

Two things can be learned from this passage that will enable us to answer the question.

1. **Firstly**, Luke testifies that at that time many undertook to write gospels: *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us (Luke 1:1).*

Indeed, at that time, many (not even the apostles) wrote and compiled narratives about the life of Jesus Christ. However, only four Gospels are inspired by Scripture. The rest of the surviving gospels are called apocrypha, which are not inspired Scripture.

2. **Secondly**, Luke testifies that in writing his Gospel he relied entirely on the testimonies of other apostles: *...just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us (Luke 1:2).*

The same applies to the Gospel of Mark, which was written by Mark from the words of other twelve apostles. And given that other apostles contributed to writing the

Gospels of Luke and Mark, they no longer needed to write additional Gospels. And what would it give you if there were twelve or more Gospels? They would only repeat each other. But everything we need to know about the Lord is contained in the four Gospels. That is why the apostle John wrote in his Gospel: *And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen (John 21:25).*

Yet other descriptions could only divert readers aside from the truth that the Lord wanted to convey to us, and He did so in the four existing Gospels. Our task is to know this Truth, be reconciled to God, and gain salvation and eternal life.

Why is there nothing said in the Bible about the seventeen years of Jesus' wanderings?

We are talking about a segment of the life of Jesus Christ from twelve years, when He was in the Jerusalem's temple with His parents, and until the age of thirty, when He was baptized by John and started His ministry. It is strange why so many people claim with such certainty that the Bible says nothing about this segment of the life of Jesus Christ. The Evangelist Luke wrote very clearly about Him: *Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:51-52).* Luke, whose works are distinguished by special historical accuracy, could not miss this period of the life of Jesus Christ and pointed out that Jesus did not wander anywhere and did not hang out, as many believe, but quietly and peacefully lived in Nazareth with His earthly parents Joseph and Mary, as well as with His brothers and sisters, developing mentally, physically, spiritually and socially, like all His contemporaries.

Satan, known to steal, kill, and destroy (**John 10:10**) and from time to time throws people the idea that during these years Jesus traveled to India and Tibet, where, allegedly, He studied yoga and oriental wisdom. The purpose of this satanic lie is obvious that is to show the superiority of Eastern wisdom over Christianity and, thus, captivate unconfirmed souls to perdition.

Jesus lived with His family and, as the eldest son, performed the duties of His father, taking care of the family: mother, brothers and sisters. He was well known in His country, and in His city, and in the city's synagogue. *Is He not the carpenter's son? — compatriots were surprised, hearing His wise teaching: Matthew 13:54-57 — When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house".*

If Jesus wandered around other countries for seventeen years, it is unlikely that anyone would recognize Him in Nazareth the city in which He grew up and matured.

Israel has always been and remained for Jesus Christ the fatherland, of which He said: *A prophet is not without honor except in his own country... (Matthew 13:57).* Jesus grew up in Israel, was raised and instructed in the Law of God, so that already at the age of twelve He amazed the elders with His wisdom and depth of thought. *And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:47).*

The Bible does not go into the details about these years of Jesus' life because it does not play a significant role, a role for our salvation. The apostle John said that all the miracles of Jesus, performed by Him in time of His earthly ministry, it is impossible to write down on paper: *And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written (John 21:25).* In other words, only a small fraction of the miracles of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Bible. What a surprise that it does not describe the everyday life of the child and adolescent Jesus! After all, His life before the first miracle, created in Cana of Galilee, was an ordinary family life, not service.

In addition, in answering this question, it is necessary to clarify that in Jewish culture a man did not leave his home until he got married. And as we know, Jesus was not married, therefore, He lived all these years with His family. And why would Jesus Christ need to go to Tibet to study and teach yoga? Can the pagan teaching of yoga be compared with the depth, wisdom and holiness of sound Biblical teachings? Let's assume that Jesus was a yoga teacher with seventeen years of practice, then why did He teach so diametrically opposite or differently during His ministry in Israel? Where is the logic?

Finally, Jesus said about Himself that it was His mission in the first place to proclaim the truth, not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews: *I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).* With such a mission, how could Jesus go to Tibet and spend seventeen years of His life on the Tibetan pagans, leaving to carry out His direct mission for the Jews and only dedicate three years of service for them? Of course, no! If Jesus said to the Samaritan woman (the Samaritans were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles) that He was sent only to serve the people of Israel, then really wouldn't He have said the same thing to the Tibetan monks? He would of said that at the meeting with them, if He had been given the opportunity. But from the Holy Scriptures we know that there was nothing like it and could not have been.

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

WOMEN THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

I. WOMAN IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Woman In The Old Testament

1. God created a woman and a man.

Genesis 1:27 — *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Genesis 5:1-2 — *This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.*

2. A woman, like a man, is created in the image and likeness of God.

Genesis 1:27 — *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

3. To a woman, as well as to a man, God gave power over all animals.

Genesis 1:28 — *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth".*

4. A woman was created after a man, from his rib.

Genesis 2:21-24 — *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man". Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

5. The main purpose of a woman is to be a man's helper.

Genesis 2:18, 20 — *And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him". ...So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.*

6. A man cannot be complete without a woman. Just like she is without him.

Genesis 2:24 — *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

7. Being an assistant does not mean being inferior or worse than a man. The same Hebrew word *helper* describes the relationship between God and Israel.

Psalms 32:20 — *Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.*

Psalms 69:6 — *But I am poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.*

8. Respect for parents.

Exodus 20:12 — *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

9. In Old Testament culture, a woman is almost equated with a thing or with property. One of the Jewish prayers is: *Lord, thank you that I am not a woman!* This is partly due to the role played by women during the Fall.

Woman in The New Testament

Jesus came to earth and demonstrated a better way — the way of love, and He allowed women to accompany Himself and His disciples as They traveled.

Luke 8:1-3 — *Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities — Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.*

He spoke to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, causing her to repent and turn from her sinful ways (John 4). Jesus did not banish Mary (Martha's sister), who sat at His feet with the rest of his disciples to listen to His teachings. Conversely, He advised Martha to do the same.

Luke 10:38-42 — *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me". And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her".*

Despite the fact that the Jews separated special places for women to worship in the temple and synagogues, the New Testament Church did not separate believers on the basis of their gender. They praised the Lord together (Acts 12:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16).

The apostle Paul wrote, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).*

However, in his epistles, the apostle Paul warns the church that the power of women in leading the church should be limited. A woman should remain silent and submit to the decisions of men at the head of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:34-36 — *Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?*

1 Timothy 2:11-14 — *Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And*



Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

How can these two seemingly contradictory facts be reconciled? Very simple. In Galatians, the apostle Paul preaches that a man and a woman are equal before God — just as a slave and his master are equal in the eyes of God. However, Paul did not call on masters to set their slaves free or slaves to overthrow the lords' power. Similarly, Paul reminds us that a wife must submit to her husband in fulfillment of church discipline and order, as well as to testify to others.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that although the Old Testament culture resembled patriarchy, the Bible tells of great women who influenced the outcome of the battle (Deborah — Judges 4-5; 9:54; Esther — Esther 4:16).

God also revealed His will to the people of Israel through female prophets (Deborah — Judges 4:4; Anna — Luke 2:36; four daughters of the maiden prophesying — Acts 21:9). The Lord used Priscilla and her husband Aquila to more accurately explain the way of the Lord to the preacher Apollos (Acts 18:26).

Among the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11 are Sarah, the wife of Abraham (verse 11), the mother of Moses (verse 23), and the harlot Rahab (verse 31). And in the book of Joel 2:28 it is said, "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions".

II. WOMAN THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

1. Woman's appearance

1 Peter 3:3-4 — *Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the*

hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

1 Timothy 2:9 — *...that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.*

2. A woman's destiny is to help her husband (Genesis 2:18-20)

1 Corinthians 11:8-9 — *For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.*

3. Character of a woman Obedience to the husband

1 Peter 3:1-6 — *Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.*

Ephesians 5:22-24 — *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

Ephesians 5:33 — *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

1 Corinthians 11:3 — *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

B. Parables of the Wife

Proverbs 11:16 — *A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.*

Proverbs 11:22 — *As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.*

Proverbs 12:4 — *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.*

Proverbs 14:1 — *The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.*

Proverbs 18:22 — *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.*

Proverbs 19:13 — *A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping.*

Proverbs 19:14 — *Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

Proverbs 27:15-16 — *A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike; whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand.*

The Biblical Example of a Virtuous Wife

Proverbs 31:10-31 — *Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, he brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them and supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "many daughters have done well, but you excel them all". Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

Who is the Holy Spirit?

There are many misconceptions about the identity of the Holy Spirit. Some view the Holy Spirit as a mystical force. Others see the Holy Spirit as an impersonal power that God makes available to followers of Christ. What does the Bible say about the identity of the Holy Spirit? Simply put, the Bible declares that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, a being with a mind, emotions, and a will.

The fact that the Holy Spirit is God is clearly seen in many Scriptures, including **Acts 5:3-4**. In these verses Peter confronts Ananias as to why he lied to the Holy Spirit and tells him that he had *not lied to men but to God*. It is a clear declaration that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. We can also know that the Holy Spirit is God because He possesses the characteristics of God. For example, His omnipresence is seen in **Psalm 139:7-8**: *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.* Then in **1 Corinthians 2:10-11**, we see the characteristic of omniscience in the Holy Spirit. *These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

We can know that the Holy Spirit is indeed a divine person because He possesses a mind, emotions, and a will. The Holy Spirit thinks and knows (**1 Corinthians 2:10**). The Holy Spirit can be grieved (**Ephesians 4:30**). The Spirit intercedes for us (**Romans 8:26-27**). He makes decisions according to His will (**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**). The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. As God, the Holy Spirit can truly function as the Comforter and Counselor that Jesus promised He would be (**John 14:16, 26; 15:26**).

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

The concept of *blasphemy against the Spirit* is mentioned in **Mark 3:22-30** and **Matthew 12:22-32**. The term *blasphemy* may be generally defined as *defiant irreverence*. The term can be applied to such sins as cursing God or willfully degrading things relating to God. Blasphemy is also attributing some evil to God or denying Him some good that we should attribute to Him. This case of blasphemy, however, is called *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* in **Matthew 12:31**. The Pharisees, having witnessed irrefutable proof that Jesus was working miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, claimed instead that the Lord was possessed by a demon (**Matthew 12:24**). Notice in **Mark 3:30** Jesus is very specific about what the Pharisees did to commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: *He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit!"*

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has to do with accusing Jesus Christ of being demon-possessed instead of Spirit-filled. This blasphemy cannot be duplicated today. Jesus Christ is not on earth — He is seated at the right hand of God. No one can personally witness Jesus performing a miracle and then attribute that power to Satan instead of the Spirit. The unpardonable sin today is the state of continued unbelief. The Spirit currently convicts the unsaved world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (**John 16:8**). To resist that conviction and willfully remain unrepentant is to *blaspheme* the Spirit. There is no pardon, either in this age or in the age to come, for a person who rejects the Spirit's promptings to trust in Jesus Christ and then dies in unbelief. The love of God is evident: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life* (**John 3:16**). And the choice is clear: *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him* (**John 3:36**).

What is the difference between a talent and a spiritual gift?

There are similarities and differences between talents and spiritual gifts. Both are gifts from God. Both grow in effectiveness with use. Both are intended to be used on behalf of others, not for selfish purposes. **First Corinthians 12:7** states that spiritual gifts are given to benefit others and not us. As the two great commandments deal with loving God and others, it follows that one should use his talents for those purposes. But to whom and when talents and spiritual gifts are given differs. A person (regardless of his belief in God or in Christ) is given a natural talent as a result of a combination of genetics (some have natural ability in music, art, or mathematics) and surroundings (growing up in a musical family will aid one in developing a talent for music), or because God desired to endow certain individuals with certain talents (for example, Bezalel in **Exodus 31:1-6**). Spiritual gifts are given to all believers by the Holy Spirit (**Romans 12:3, 6**) at the time they place their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. At that moment, the Holy Spirit gives the new believer the spiritual gift(s) He desires the believer to have (**1 Corinthians 12:11**).

Romans 12:3-8 lists the spiritual gifts as follows: prophecy, serving others (in a general sense), teaching, exhorting, generosity, leadership, and showing mercy. **First Corinthians 12:8-11** lists the gifts as the word of wisdom (ability to communicate spiritual wisdom), the word of knowledge (ability to communicate practical truth), faith (unusual reliance upon God), the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues (ability to speak in a language that one has not studied), and interpretation of tongues. The third list is found in **Ephesians 4:10-12**, which speaks of God giving to His church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. There is also a question as to how many spiritual gifts there are, as no two lists are the same. It is also possible that the biblical lists are not exhaustive, that there are additional spiritual gifts beyond the ones the Bible mentions.

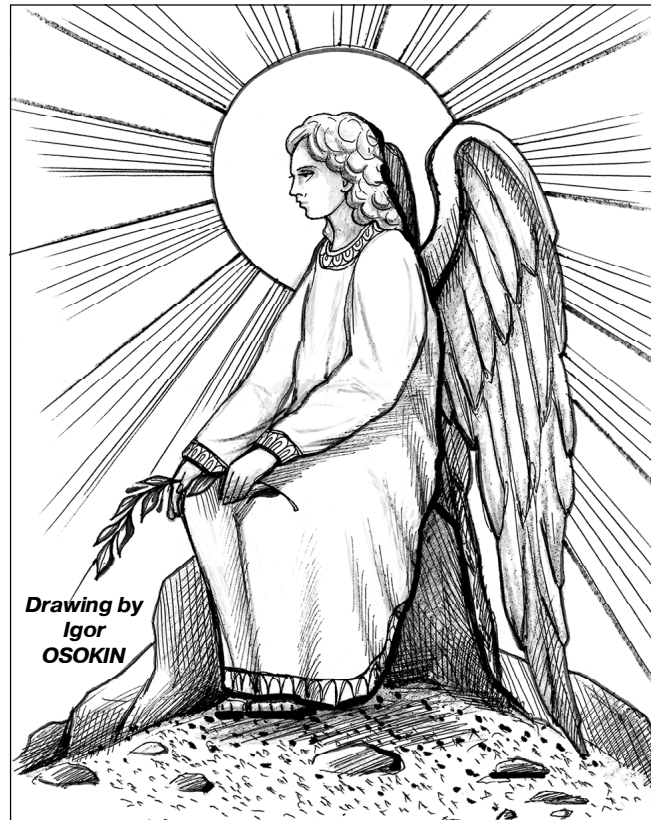
While one may develop his talents and later direct his profession or hobby along those lines, spiritual gifts were given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of Christ's church. In that, all Christians are to play an active part in the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. All are called and equipped to be

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ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

involved in the *work of the ministry* (**Ephesians 4:12**). All are gifted so that they can contribute to the cause of Christ out of gratitude for all He has done for them. In doing so, they also find fulfillment in life through their labor for Christ. It is the job of the church leaders to help build up the saints so they can be further equipped for the ministry to which God has called them. The intended result of spiritual gifts is that the church can grow, being strengthened by the combined supply of each member of Christ's body.

To summarize the differences between spiritual gifts and talents: 1) A talent is the result of genetics and/or training, while a spiritual gift is the result of the power of the Holy Spirit. 2) A talent can be possessed by anyone, Christian or non-Christian, while spiritual gifts are only possessed by Christians. 3) While both talents and spiritual gifts should be used for God's glory and to minister to others, spiritual gifts are focused on these tasks, while talents can be used entirely for non-spiritual purposes.



What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?

Of all the gifts given to mankind by God, there is none greater than the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has many functions, roles, and activities. First, He does a work in the hearts of all people everywhere. Jesus told the disciples that He would send the Spirit into the world to *convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment* (**John 16:8, NASB**). Everyone has a *God consciousness*, whether they admit it. The Spirit applies God's truths to people's minds to convince them by fair and sufficient arguments that they are sinners. Responding to that conviction brings us to salvation.

Once we are saved and belong to God, the Spirit takes up residence in our hearts forever, sealing us with the confirming, certifying, and assuring pledge of our eternal state as His children. Jesus said He would send the Spirit to us to be our Helper, Comforter, and Guide. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever* (**John 14:16**). The Greek word translated here *Counselor* means *one who is called alongside* and has the idea of someone who encourages and exhorts. The Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in the hearts of believers (**Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 12:13**). Jesus gave the Spirit as a *compensation* for His absence, to perform the functions toward us that He would have done if He had remained personally with us.

Among those functions is that of revealer of truth. The Spirit's presence within us enables us to understand and interpret God's Word. Jesus told His disciples that *when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth* (**John 16:13**). He reveals to our minds the whole counsel of God as it relates to worship, doctrine, and Christian living. He is the ultimate guide, going before, leading the way, removing obstructions, opening the understanding, and making all things plain and clear. He leads in the way we should go in all spiritual things. Without such a guide, we would be apt to fall into error. A crucial part of the truth He reveals is that Jesus is who He said He is (**John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3**). The Spirit convinces us of Christ's deity and incarnation, His being the Messiah, His suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension, His exaltation at the right hand of God, and His role as the judge of all. He gives glory to Christ in all things (**John 16:14**).

Another one of the Holy Spirit's roles is that of gift-giver. **First Corinthians 12** describes the spiritual gifts given to believers in order that we may function as the body of Christ on earth. All these gifts, both great and small, are given by the Spirit so that we may be His ambassadors to the world, showing forth His grace and glorifying Him.

The Spirit also functions as fruit-producer in our lives. When He indwells us, He begins the work of harvesting His fruit in our lives — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (**Galatians 5:22-23**). These are not works of our flesh, which is incapable of

producing such fruit, but they are products of the Spirit's presence in our lives.

The knowledge that the Holy Spirit of God has taken up residence in our lives, that He performs all these miraculous functions, that He dwells with us forever, and that He will never leave or forsake us is cause for great joy and comfort. Thank God for this precious gift — the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives!

What are the names and titles of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is known by many names and titles, most of which denote some function or aspect of His ministry. Below are some of the names and descriptions the Bible uses for the Holy Spirit:

Author of Scripture: (**2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16**) The Bible is inspired, literally *God-breathed*, by the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. The Spirit moved the authors of all 66 books to record exactly what He breathed into their hearts and minds. As a ship is moved through the water by wind in its sails, so the biblical writers were borne along by the Spirit's impulse.

Comforter/Counselor/Advocate: (**Isaiah 11:2; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7**) All three words are translations of the Greek *parakletos*, from which we get *Paraclete*, another name for the Spirit. When Jesus went away, His disciples were greatly distressed because they had lost His comforting presence. But He promised to send the Spirit to comfort, console, and guide those who belong to Christ. The Spirit also *bears witness* with our spirits that we belong to Him and thereby assures us of salvation.

Convicter of Sin: (**John 16:7-11**) The Spirit applies the truths of God to men's own minds in order to convince them by fair and sufficient arguments that they are sinners. He does this through the conviction in our hearts that we are not worthy to stand before a holy God, that we need His righteousness, and that judgment is certain and will come to all men one day. Those who deny these truths rebel against the conviction of the Spirit.

Deposit/Seal/Earnest: (**2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14**) The Holy Spirit is God's seal on His people, His claim on us as His very own. The gift of the Spirit to believers is a down payment on our heavenly inheritance, which Christ has promised us and secured for us at the cross. It is because the Spirit has sealed us that we are assured of our salvation. No one can break the seal of God.

Guide: (**John 16:13**) Just as the Spirit guided the writers of Scripture to record truth, so does He promise to guide believers to know and understand that truth. God's truth is *foolishness* to the world, because it is *spiritually discerned* (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). Those who belong to Christ have the indwelling Spirit who guides us into all we need to know regarding spiritual matters. Those who do not belong to Christ have no *interpreter* to guide them to know and understand God's Word.

Indweller of Believers: (**Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 6:19**) The Holy Spirit resides in the hearts of God's people, and that indwelling is the distinguishing characteristic of the regenerated person. From within believers, He directs, guides, comforts, and influences us, as well as producing in us the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). He provides the intimate connection between God and His children. All true believers in Christ have the Spirit residing in their hearts.

Intercessor: (**Romans 8:26**) One of the most encouraging and comforting aspects of the Holy Spirit is His ministry of intercession on behalf of those He inhabits. Because we often don't know what or how to pray when we approach God, the Spirit intercedes and prays for us. He intercedes for us *with wordless groans*, so that when we are oppressed and overwhelmed by trials and the cares of life, He comes alongside to lend assistance as He sustains us before the throne of grace.

Revealer / Spirit of Truth: (**John 14:17; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16**) Jesus promised that, after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit would come to *guide you into all truth*. Because of the Spirit in our hearts, we can understand truth, especially in spiritual matters, in a way that non-Christians cannot. In fact, the truth the Spirit reveals to us is *foolishness* to them, and they cannot understand it. But we have the mind of Christ in the Person of His Spirit within us.

Spirit of God / the Lord / Christ: (**Matthew 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Peter 1:11**) These names remind us that the Spirit of God is indeed part of the triune godhead and that He is just as much God as the Father and the Son. He is first revealed to us at the creation, when He was *hovering over the waters*, denoting His part in creation, along with that of Jesus who *made all things* (**John 1:1-3**). We see this same Trinity of God again at Jesus' baptism, when the Spirit descends on Jesus and the voice of the Father is heard.

Spirit of Life: (**Romans 8:2**) The phrase *Spirit of life* means the Holy Spirit is the one who produces or gives life, not that He initiates salvation, but rather that He imparts newness of life. When we receive eternal life through Christ, the Spirit provides the spiritual food that is the sustenance of the spiritual life. Here again, we see the triune God at work. We are saved by the Father through the work of the Son, and that salvation is sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: (**John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13**) Jesus promised that the Spirit would teach His disciples *all things* and bring to their remembrance the things He said while He was with them. The writers of the New Testament were moved by the Spirit to remember and understand the instructions Jesus gave for the building and organizing of the Church, the doctrines regarding Himself, the directives for holy living, and the revelation of things to come.

Witness: (**Romans 8:16; Hebrews 2:4; 10:15**) The Spirit is called *witness* because He verifies and testifies to the fact that we are children of God, that Jesus and the disciples who performed miracles were sent by God, and that the books of the Bible are divinely inspired. Further, by giving the gifts of the Spirit to believers, He witnesses to us and the world that we belong to God.

Poisoning of consciousness

There is nothing more dangerous than a poisoned person. In other words, when a person is physically poisoned it's one thing, but when a person is poisoned in their mind, it is completely different.

When a person has a poisoned consciousness, the first thing that happens is that the soul of the person is poisoned and not only the whole way of life is put at risk, but also the dream from God. The soul of a person (well, feelings and emotions) is the engine of their life.

When a person is spiritually poisoned, the priorities in their life change, and the spiritually poisoned begin to do what they would never do. Thinking deeper, I can say that a spiritually poisoned minister is a dangerous servant, because everyone who did not recognize in time and did not step aside will also be poisoned.

There are only two things that, according to Christ, the children of God need to be wary of: the leaven of Herod and the leaven of the Pharisees. These are the two streams of information in which there is a force that can poison and pervert the human soul. This is one of the most effective weapons that devil uses against the servants of God.

How many times have we seen in recent years how leaders poisoned by politics, the creation of their own false doctrines and movements, the greed for profit or lust for glory, have misled the masses into the same delusion. You and I have witnessed the destruction of great ministries and strong societies among the

inhabitants, and all these are the consequences of spiritual poisoning.

Spiritual poisoning leads the life of a child of God to complete chaos: now everything that you believed and craved is put under question and, conversely, what you previously hated begins to attract you.

The Apostle Paul, in Galatians, asks the question, *Why did you begin with the spirit and end with flesh? Who poisoned you?* That is, you can start absolutely correctly, but then fall under the influence of spiritual poisoning.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain? (Galatians 3:1-4).

There's a prime example in the Bible: King Saul, who used to destroy witches, goes to them for power, and puts the prophets of God he guarded to death. The question is, why does what he used to love, now he hates, and what he hated, now loves? This is spiritual poisoning.

When you're under the influence of spiritual poisoning, you don't recognize yourself.

We sometimes get letters cursing us and saying, *We listened to you, and our lives have changed, but we've been informed about who you are. Now we know that you are servants of the devil* and so on.

What happened? Such people started spiritually, but then they allowed someone into their lives, and they were completely poisoned, and now they live in complete spiritual chaos, because they could not see the attack of the enemy on their souls. That is, God attracted them into this movement, and man brought them out.

To be honest, a spiritually poisoned person will very rarely accept advice or help because he will think that he is right. A spiritually poisoned person is a person who has created his own reality.

Usually, God leaves such persons until complete collapse, and only after a complete failure will a person be able to hear God and move towards healing and restoration.

Here are a few areas that need to be guarded so as not to fall under the influence of spiritual influence.

1. Information poisoning

Overload with unnecessary information. The endless viewing of the news, the constant surveillance of the financial exchange, the empty talk shows, and so on — usually the personal ones who pay too much attention to it all, they don't have a real relationship with the Holy Spirit. They're

busy, they're thinking and arguing that they can't really change the thread. It all leads to spiritual exhaustion. Fatigue and in the process leads to poisoning. And it's also very easy to get rid of people who are empty and unnecessary.

2. Emotional poisoning

Armed conflicts, murder, suicide, abortion, torture, bullying, political filth, and so on — the devil puts you in his world with information about all of this, and you begin to see only pain, destruction, blood, and suffering. Individuals immersed in all this are on a constant breakdown, they are always in a depressed state, they often have health problems. Their prayers are not of the spirit, and from a wounded soul. They also have frequent nightmares, and they tend to judge everyone around them for being blind and not seeing anything around them.

All this poisons the human spirit and leads to physical and mental destruction and serious physical illnesses.

3. Mystical poisoning

Watching psychics, fortune tellers, witches, sorcerers, magicians, clairvoyants, television series about vampires and werewolves, reading demonic literature, etc. All this poisons the spirit of a Christian. Not finding such a mystical show in the church, such a person begins to demand it, to desire mystical power and authority and in the process, he walks the line of what is

permissible and falls into pure occultism.

4. Poisoning of the inner world

This is when a person on some forums, in blogs, in social networks, and so on is trying to prove his case, constantly being in disputes and useless chatter. You allow someone to fall into your *personal space*, and once there, these people poison you from the inside.

When a person allows other people to pour dirt on him and listens to negative words and curses in his address and the address of those who are dear to him, or is in a society that curses, hates and persecutes the movement and glory of God, he will very soon become like those around him, if he does not leave these people.

5. Prevention of personal influence

When a person becomes fanatically interested in personalities in politics or religion, he tends to become very aggressive towards any other point of view and completely intercepts the point of view of his idol. Such a person automatically becomes a carrier and a wanderer of someone else's point of view: doctrines, ideas, and so on. His principles and even his faith start to shake and collapse.

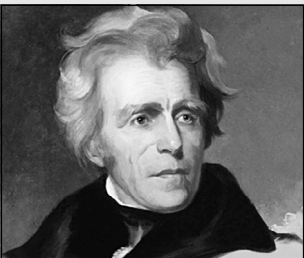
I ask the Holy Spirit to give wisdom to God's children to learn how to guard their consciousness, their soul, and their spirit.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Proverbs 4:23).

Andrey SHAPOVALOV,
<http://shapovalov.us>

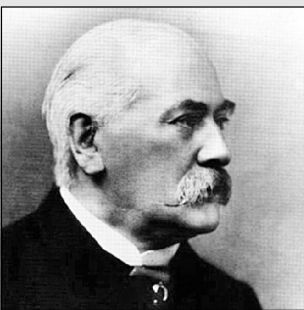
QUOTES FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE

Andrew JACKSON,
7th President
of the United States:



"This book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests".

BRUGS, Egyptologist



Recalling his childhood, he says: "The greatest pleasure in the house of my grandfather and grandmother was the reading of the family Bible located there, which was decorated with polytypes and before my admiring gaze in a charming light conveyed the life and deeds of the ancient inhabitants of the East. This reverence-worthy Book of, which I still hold, has fascinated me, and I attribute to it the first passionate desire of my article, to get acquainted with people and the countries of the East".

V. G. BELINSKY,
Russian critic

He paid special attention to the Gospel, considering it "the best book, where everything that a person needs to know is said". "There is a book", he said, "in which everything



is said, everything is decided, after which there is no doubt about anything, the book is immortal, the holy book, the book of eternal life, the Gospel".

Lord TENNISON,
English poet



Lord Tennyson had the honorary title of Poet Laureate (Queen Victoria conferred on him for his poetic work the title of Baron, which made Tennyson a peer of England): "Reading the bible is an education in itself".

CHRISTIAN NEWS

Tony Evans says US facing God's judgement because Christians are *cultural*, not *biblical*

We've been more cultural Christians than biblical Christians, Evans, the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, told The Christian Post in a sit-down interview.

Our identity is to be rooted in the Imago Dei, in the image of God. But we've gotten so ingrained in the thinking of the culture, that we wind up being parakeets to what the society is saying, rather than taking a solid, loving but clear stance on what God is saying, he continued.

The 72-year-old founder and president of The Urban Alternative is the author of over 125 books, booklets and Bible studies. The first African American to earn a doctorate in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, he recently released an updated version of his 2015 book, *Oneness Embraced: A Kingdom Approach to Race, Reconciliation, and Justice*.

In it, he offers an alternative way of looking at the racial tensions seen across the country and a biblical framework for unity, why it matters, what it is, and how it works.

From womb to tomb, God identifies the person as a bearer of the image of God, so much so that James 3:9 says that you can't even curse a person because they are created in the image of God, he said.

The dignity of every human being has to be held in the highest standard less you insult God. And when you understand that, that is how God made us and that is how he wants us to relate, God is not colorblind, He's just not blinded by color. He recognizes and has created the uniquenesses of the cultures in which we are born and the ethnicities, but He never wants that to be the deciding factor for decision making in our lives.

Evans explained that elevating anything — identity, race or national allegiance — above Christianity is idolatry, and whenever that national allegiance causes you to have non-Christian perspectives, underneath the flag, then what you have done is you've created a national idol that God must resist, reject and judge.

I think one of the things we're facing now is the judgment on America because the failure of the Church to be the people of God that represents His Kingdom more than we represent the nation, the pastor said.

God's judgment is currently playing out, he said, as evidenced by the conflicts that seem unending in recent years. He cited **2 Chronicles 15:3-6**, which reads, in part: *One nation was being crushed by another and one*

city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress, and Romans 1, which speaks of God removing Himself from those who remove themselves from Him.

So we're actually praying, preaching and having worship services while telling God He's not invited, because of our illegitimate disunity, which means we just wasted our time, he said.

The answer, Evans said, is reconciliation and unity, and that's something the Church desperately needs. He encouraged Christians to act as *bridge builders* and foster relationships with those across the racial and cultural lines *without compromising the essentials of the faith*.

From God's throne comes righteousness and justice. Righteousness is the standard of right and wrong that is established by God. Justice is the equitable application of

God's moral law applied in society. So one is vertical obedience, and the other is a horizontal relationship. And whenever you have the vertical and horizontal you can have the cross. Evans contended.

Evans also issued a challenge to pastors and church leaders as scandals within the ministry continue to arise and reports reveal that just 37% of pastors have a biblical worldview.

I want to challenge them to stay tethered to the Word and their relationship to the Lord as their primary goal, because ministry can become a God within itself; it can become your idol, the Winning Your Spiritual Battles author said.

And when ministry becomes your idol, God is in the background, and when God is in the background, you become vulnerable, he continued. So I would say keep that dynamic to God's Word and God's person as a promise in your life, and then have people around you who can speak into you with authority. Don't be an isolated Lone Ranger, because like a salmon swimming upstream, a bear can pick you off if you're isolated. So you want to make sure that you're in relationships that can be sustainable, and that can be authoritative in your life.

But though times can seem bleak, Evans emphasized that *we can still have hope*, because one of two things is happening: God is allowing chaos because He's setting things up for His return, or, if He's not returning on the short term, He's doing a *divine reset and reshaping culture, because He's been marginalized too long.*

The Christian Post.

A man survived a twenty-hour baptism at sea after falling from a cruise ship: *The Lord was with me*

An American who fell from a cruise ship at sea said that it was God who gave him the strength to stay afloat for twenty hours. Rescuers noted that by the time the man was pulled out of the water, he had half a minute of strength left, no more.

James Michael Grimes had always dreamed of going on a sea cruise, so his heart pounded furiously when, the night before Thanksgiving, he climbed aboard the *Carnival Valor* cruise ship.

The holiday promised to be exciting — cruise ship on the Gulf of Mexico and Thanksgiving, surrounded by relatives.

James Michael spent the evening at a private dinner with eighteen members of his family. After dinner, drinks at the bar and winning the *air guitar* competition, the man beat five cousins and left the hall in a great mood. The celebration was a success.

James woke up around midnight. There was water and pitch darkness all around. Coughing up the salt water, he spun in all directions, realizing more and more acutely that it was not a dream. He's in the Gulf of Mexico, by himself.

The last thing he remembers is the stateroom on the sixth floor of the liner. *To fall from such a height and stay alive? Where is the ship?*

There's a tiny light in the distance. Maybe that's it?

James begins to swim in this direction, but quickly realizes that his clothes are interfering with him. You'll have to get rid of it, leave only the shorts. Now it's a little easier to swim, but the light has almost disappeared over the horizon.

Three o'clock in the morning, Grimes has been in the water for three hours.

You've always been a good swimmer, he kept telling himself. But there are too many jellyfish. The whole body — the back, the legs, the neck — burned from them. You have to literally peel them off the skin.

Around six in the morning, the sun appears over the water surface. James

has been in the water for six hours. He notices a lonely light in the distance and prays that it will be the platform of an oil rig. Now he's floating to that light in the distance, because if it's her, if it's a platform, it's almost certainly going to save his life.

A storm seems to be brewing. The waves become higher, and because of them, there is almost no visible glow to which he swims. The waves are calming down, it seems that there will be no storm, but the light has also disappeared.

Fifteen minutes after eleven, and James is in the water for more than ten hours. He thinks about his daughter Annabeth, he thinks about God, will he soon go to Heaven?

He notices three dim lights that seem to be quite far away. Grimes begins to swim to the lights, because it should be the platform of the oil well tower, which will save his life. The sun hits his eyes when the rescue platform seems to be no more than three hundred meters away.

Here it is! James thinks, *I'll live*. But suddenly he gets knocked off course. The waves get higher again, the current turns him the other way, moving him further away from the life-saving lights. They get smaller and smaller until they disappear altogether.

It's well past noon, and James is in the water for almost thirteen hours. There's a bump on his leg, and it's something very big with a flat head. He barely peels off some fish, but again finds himself surrounded by jellyfish.

There is almost no strength left. Grimes decided to succumb to the waves: it's easier that way. A stick floats by. It tastes tolerable, you need at least something to eat.

Three o'clock in the afternoon, and



James is in the water for fifteen hours. Unbearably thirsty. *It's crazy*, he thinks, *there's billions of liters of water around, but you can't take a sip*. He decides to drink some seawater, but he vomits right away. How much longer can he stay afloat?

Suddenly, a huge cruise liner appears nearby. Is it a dream? His heart is pounding furiously — they will save me!

He screams, waves his arms, losing his strength. The cruise ship passes by, and then it gets smaller and smaller until it turns into a point.

From somewhere deep inside, moans and tears erupt. Apparently, this is the end of the story.

Eight o'clock in the evening, and James Michael Grimes is still afloat, he has been in the water for twenty hours. In the distance, lights reappear.

What is this? Platform? Ship?

His heart jumps when he sees a cargo ship approaching him. Why are the arms and legs not obeying at the right moment?

James tries to sail to the ship, but it turns out badly. However, the vessel comes close enough to make out the silhouettes of people on the balcony. He screams, waves his arms, exhausting himself.

Help! Grimes shouts.

A voice reaches him:

Where are you?

I'm in the water! He shouts. I'm in the water!

The men on the ship spot him and throw James lifebuoys. They don't approach him.

The Coast Guard has been looking for you ever since your family reported you missing, a voice is heard. Hold on for fifteen minutes, they'll soon be here to save you!

James floats on his back, his body relaxed. *What is fifteen minutes when I've been treading water for twenty hours?*

There is a strong noise, the wind rises. The light of the searchlight glides across the water surface — the helicopter flies around the cargo ship three times, James waves his hands. *It can't be*, he thinks. Suddenly, the spotlight finds him.

Thanksgiving, half past nine in the evening, James Michael Grimes was pulled out of the water thirty minutes ago. Rescuers shake their heads in amazement. There are four days ahead in the intensive care unit and deep gratitude to the Lord for the gift of life.

The Lord has been with me all this time, says James Michael. In a way, it was a twenty-hour baptism that brought me closer to God. I know that He saved me for a reason, and now I must live according to His plan.

The Lord was with me while I was there because something was holding me up the whole time I was unconscious. I think it was Him.

Aviation survival specialist Richard Hofle told *CBS News* that James was thirty seconds away from drowning when he was found.

Although the man's skin was badly damaged by the salt water, he had no other wounds. He also lost nine pounds.

When asked by reporters if he would dare to board the cruise ship again after the incident, James, smiling, nodded: *Of course, and next time I plan to stay on board.*

Based on CNN and *wvtm13*, <https://inlight.news>

There is a short story by Hans Christian Andersen called *The Pen and the Inkstand*.

In the story the pen and the inkstand compete for the accolades.

The inkstand said to the pen: *It is wonderful and extraordinary what a number of things come out of me. It's quite incredible, and I really don't know what is coming next when that man dips his pen into me. One drop out of me is enough for half a page of paper, and what cannot half a page contain? From me, all the works of a poet are produced; all those imaginary characters whom people fancy they have known or met. All the deep feeling, the humour, and the vivid pictures of nature. I myself don't understand how it is, for I am not acquainted with nature, but it is certainly in me.*

Said the pen, *you don't think at all; if you did, you would see that you can only provide the means. You give the fluid that I may place upon the paper what dwells in me, and what I wish to bring to light. It is the pen that writes: no man doubts that; and, indeed, most people understand as much about poetry as an old inkstand.*

Late in the evening the poet came home. He had been to a concert, and had been quite enchanted with the admirable performance of a famous violin player whom he had heard there. ...It was a wonderful performance and a difficult piece, and yet the bow seemed to glide across

Intelligent Ink?



the strings so easily that it was as if any one could do it who tried. Even the violin and the bow appeared to perform independently of their master who guided them; it was as if soul and spirit had been breathed into the instrument, so the audience forgot the performer in the beautiful sounds he produced. Not so the poet; he remembered him, and named him, and wrote down his thoughts on the subject. *How foolish it would be for the violin and the bow to boast of*

their performance, and yet we men often commit that folly.

Now Hans Christian Andersen wrote the story in order to point to the fact that we are all instruments that the Almighty uses. However, he unintentionally makes another point. The absurdity of the pen or the ink being responsible for the poetry is patent. They are the tools, the instruments, but it needs the mind of the poet to create meaning. The ordering of the words to convey information cannot come from the tools themselves. If a gust of wind knocked the pen and inkstand over, the resultant ink blot would have no meaning — even if it by chance resembled a word. If there was no poet, and no-one to read and understand the poetry, then the ink and the pen could produce nothing.

But that is exactly what the proponents of atheistic evolution believe. It really is as absurd as that. Creationists deride cosmic evolution as a theory which says *hydrogen is a colourless, odourless gas which, given enough time, turns into people*. This is considered to be an insult to the sophisticated who accept evolutionary theory, but in essence that is what it boils down to. Where does the information come from which will restructure matter and give it meaning? Does it come from the

matter itself? For if there is no outside intelligence, that is exactly what must be the case.

Therefore, to the secular evolutionist, the ink and the pen themselves are the source of the poetry, for there is no poet. But if there is no poet, how can the words created be recognized as words? It can only be that there is intelligent ink. The ink itself needs to reproduce itself, and creates an elaborate language to express that need. It expresses that need to other intelligent inks. Does anyone in their right mind believe that?

But if for *ink* you read the chemical structure of DNA, with its 4 bases (this is the *raw material* with which the genetic language is written), and for *pen* you read the structure of DNA and RNA, the tool which uses the basic raw material, then surely that is what evolutionists believe.

Hans Christian Andersen gently mocked the idea that the pen or inkstand themselves could create poetry. How he might have laughed at the notion that DNA and genes could by themselves create living beings! In modern terms, it is equivalent to saying that a word processor left to itself would, given time, write the instruction manual to use itself — and more than that, to program itself.

Michael MATTHEWS,
creation.com

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

An **idol** is a false god; a being, thing, or image that replaces the true Creator God. An idol is any object or being that a person endows with supernatural abilities that they do not actually possess.

Idolatry is worship of creation instead of the Creator: **Romans 1:25** — who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

1. Biblical Examples of Idolatry

Jacob forbade having idols in his house.

Genesis 35:2-4 — And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone". So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods

gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a shrine and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

☉ **Worship of all sorts of pagan idols: Ezekiel 8. 2. Types of idols**

A. Man-Made Idols (All of God's Creation):

☉ universe, sky, earth, stars, sun, moon;
☉ people (relatives, outstanding people, heroes, holy people, and so on);
☉ Nature (mountains, rivers, stones) and wildlife.

B. Man-made idols (idols-sculptures):

☉ idols that were considered gods;
☉ idols that represented the gods were their images;

the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for of what account is he?

God created us in His image and likeness. People create gods in their own image and under their own image: **Psalms 113:11-16**, But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not

IDOLS AND IDOLATRY

which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.

B. King Nebuchadnezzar commanded to worship the golden idol.

Daniel 3:1-7 — Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace". So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

B. Idolatry of Israel

☉ **The worship of the golden calf: Exodus 32:7-8** — And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"

☉ **Worship of the Goddess of Heaven: Jeremiah 44:15-17** — Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, we were well-off, and saw no trouble".

☉ **Worship of Gideon's Ephesus: Judges 8:22-27** — Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian". But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you". Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder". For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites. So they answered, "We will gladly give them". And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels' necks. Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

☉ **Adoration of the Cast Idol: Judges 17:16** — Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears — here is the silver with me; I took it". And his mother said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my son!" So, when he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the Lord for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you". Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and

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☉ idols that were intermediaries between the material and spiritual worlds;

☉ idols, which were the receptacles of invisible gods (spirits);

C. Fictional idols (idea idols):

☉ communism,
☉ pantheism,
☉ krishnaism,
☉ aliens and so on.

II. EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IDOLATRY

1. Idolatry is a perversion of the concept of the true God

Deuteronomy 4:15-19 — Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and **make for yourselves a carved image** in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to **worship them and serve them**, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.

God is spirit. Any attempt to portray God in a material form is a perversion, for it cannot be done. Idolatry can only further lead a person away from the true God.

In addition, idolatry is a distorted view of the world. That is why idolaters are superstitious people.

2. Idolatry is a manifestation of human arrogance

Isaiah 2:8-22 — Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. People bow down, and each man humbles himself; therefore do not forgive them. Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything **proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up** — and it shall be brought low — Upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; Upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; Upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, But the idols He shall utterly abolish. They shall go into

handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.

The arrogance is that instead of worshipping the Creator, man himself determines how, when and whom he will worship. And, by worshipping the work of his hands, man worships himself.

3. Idolatry leads to spiritual and physical corruption and death

Romans 1:19-32 — ...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 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.

Depravity is a consequence of idolatry. God calls for holiness. Whoever rejects the Lord, rejects his holiness. The result is depravity and iniquity.

4. Idolatry is the door to relationships with demonic forces

1 Corinthians 10:20 — ...Gentiles sacrifice **they sacrifice to demons** and not to God.

Idolatry is the means by which people try to gain supernatural powers. By worshipping idols (that is, anything/anyone but the Creator), a person bows to demons.

Also, idolaters, whether they realize it or not, sponsor Satan. Why? Because there's a whole industry to fool superstitious people. By buying their horoscopes, lottery tickets, amulets, talismans, and similar things, people are sponsoring the god of this world, the devil, who has blinded their minds.

III. GOD'S RELATION TO IDOLATRY

1. Idolatry is a sin, a denial of the Almighty, God the Creator.

Job 31:24-28 — If I have made **gold my hope**, or said to fine gold, "You are my confidence"; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had **gained much**; if I have observed the **sun** when it shines, or the **moon** moving in brightness, so that my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand; this also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above.

2. Idolatry is forbidden by the Law of God

Exodus 20:1-6 — And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; **you shall not bow down to them nor serve them**. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (also **Deuteronomy 4:15-19**).

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IDOLS AND IDOLATRY

(Continued from page 11)

3. According to the Old Testament Law, the idolater was to be put to death

Exodus 22:20 — He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

☉ **The idolater's closest relatives were not only to convict them, but also to participate in their extermination: Deuteronomy 13:6-10** — If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods', which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

The idolater was to be put to death according to the testimony of at least two witnesses, who were to be the first to throw a stone at them after the death sentence was ruled: Deuteronomy 17:2-7 — If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

4. An attempt to seduce one's neighbor into idolatry was considered a violation of Gods Law and was equated with idolatry

Deuteronomy 13:12-16 — If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you to dwell in, saying, "Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods'" — which you have not known — then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock — with the edge of the sword. And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the Lord your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again.

5. The prophet Isaiah ridicules idolaters Isaiah 44:9-20 — All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing? People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it

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in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in



the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire". **From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships.** He prays to it and says, "Save me! You are my god!" They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. **Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?**" Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

ATTENTION!

Dear readers, today the newspaper "Prisoner" has the status of the three languages: Russian, Ukrainian and English. "Prisoner" is printed in Ukraine and in America. However, it is published and distributed exclusively by voluntary donations. For all those wishing to contribute to the success of "Prisoner" all the requisites are indicated in the last column of the newspaper. For those in America who wish to donate to the newspaper "Prisoner" and support the prison ministry, there is a tear off form, where you can donate and specify what you want the donation to go for. God bless you!

6. The prophet Ezekiel warns idolaters of God's wrath and the coming punishment on them

Ezekiel 6:4-7 — Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars. In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate, so that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, your idols may be broken and made to cease, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

The Lord God does not change, and His word is unchanging. In any age and country we live in, the Lord will punish us if we serve and worship someone other than Him.

7. In the New Testament, idolatry is closely intertwined with greed (lust, greed)

Matthew 6:24 — ...for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Colossians 3:5 — Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Ephesians 5:5 — For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

8. The New Testament forbids the worship of idols and warns that idolaters of the kingdom of God will not inherit

1 John 5:21 — Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 Corinthians 10:14-21 — Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread

and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Revelation 21:8 — But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

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"Lord Jesus, I believe you are God's Son; You died for my sins and rose again for my salvation. I accept you as my personal Lord and Savior. Please forgive all my sins and grant me eternal life. Amen!"



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