

PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

«And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free»

(John 8:32)

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Today, marks twenty-five years of my stay in the most stringent regime in the prison system. There is complete uncertainty about my freedom ahead.

Is a life sentence a punishment or torture? How is life imprisonment different from the death penalty? How much more humane is it to use «death by installments» than to deprive a person of life at once? Does the so-called humanity of our laws allow anyone to think that life imprisonment is a privilege for criminals? To bury a man alive without the slightest hope of liberation is the most sophisticated torture that can be.

live and create something good for His glory. Death, though we breathe, we perceive with optimism. In the foreground is always the Lord, and to death, if it comes, you are treated as a valuable asset. As Paul said, **«For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain»** (Philippians 1:21).

However, today I express a purely personal opinion regarding life and death, as I am a believer. In general, I regard life imprisonment without the right to liberty as a sophisticated torture for people. It is incomprehensible to me, why does one need to fill prisons with such a category of convicts as those imprisoned for life? First,

the fact that the administration of the institution considers the pardon of the convicted person to be inexpedient or premature. The answers come exactly the same for all life sentenced inmates, only the last name, name and patronymic of the convict is added to the response. It seems that the administration of the institution is to blame for everything, for it allegedly does not want to pardon inmates on life-sentence. However, this is not so. The pardoning commission does not respond to the positive characteristics in which the administration of the institution clearly states (in its conclusion) that such a convicted

AN EYE FOR AN EYE...



The Constitution of our country (Article 27) states: «Everyone has the inalienable right to life. No one can be arbitrarily deprived of life. The duty of the state is to protect human life...»

On the basis of this article, the death penalty was abolished in our country (Ukraine), replacing this measure of punishment with a supposedly milder and more humane life sentence. Since then, the most severe punishment is life imprisonment.

This morning I once again opened my eyes and realized that I was still alive. I thanked God for giving me another new day, and immediately asked Him, «Lord, am I needed for something?!» Honestly, if it were not for my faith in God and my work for Him (as an editor), I would have probably long ago thought about how to leave this life. After all, I have no chance of being released (by human standards). I have already been denied pardon four times, and there is also no other alternative to liberation in our country. Today more than one and a half thousand people are inmates imprisoned for life in prisons of Ukraine, of which twenty-three are women. Many have already served more than twenty years, and many have already died. Not everyone can withstand being locked up in a cell for twenty-four hours a day. Without even the smallest hope of liberation, a person simply decays from the inside. It is as if you live, and at the same time as if you are not living. It is good if a person is still busy with something and does not focus his attention on everything that surrounds him. For when a person starts noticing his environment and everything around him, he simply becomes uncomfortable. Decades spent in the chamber system, one way or another, have a detrimental effect on a person – not only mentally (intellectually), but also physically. There is no hope of freedom, and therefore the desire to live becomes less and less. The only thing that saves us from suicide is faith in God. Thanks to Him, we try to

you are given the death penalty, then, stepping over all the laws, as was done in 2000, you are completely illegally transferred to life imprisonment. And if at the same time a person is not given the slightest chance of liberation, does he have any incentive to live at all? Why does the government spend a huge pile of money on the maintenance of such a category of convicts if these people do not have any prospects? Why in all civilized European countries there is a parole for life prisoners, and in our country this is still not the case?

If we turn to the experience of countries with advanced penal systems, we will be surprised by their example. The minimum number of years that must be served in prison in order to be able to be released from life imprisonment is as follows: Austria – 15, Belgium – 15 (with an increase to 19 or 23 for repeat offenders), Bulgaria – 20, Cyprus – 12, Czech Republic – 20, Denmark – 12, Finland – 12, France – usually 18, Germany – 15, Greece – 20, Hungary – 20 (if the court did not give another sentence), Ireland – 7 (except for certain types of murders), Italy – 26, Latvia – 25, Liechtenstein – 15, Luxembourg – 15, Monaco – 15, Poland – 25, Romania – 20, Slovakia – 25, Slovenia – 25, Sweden 10, Switzerland – 15 (may be reduced up to 10), and Macedonia – 15 (this information is taken from ECHR in the case of *D. Vinter and Others v. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*).

Today in our country there is only one chance to get freedom, we need to be pardoned by the president of Ukraine. However, the law on pardon does not stipulate anywhere, by what criteria is the candidacy of a life prisoner who submits his petition for pardon. In the pardon commission, no one pays attention to the characteristics that the administration of this or that institution provides for life prisoners. The pardon department responds and refers to the fact that they allegedly refuse due to

person deserves such an act of mercy as pardon. In this case, it is reported from the pardon department that they refused because the convicted person committed a particularly serious crime without taking into account that this crime was committed more than twenty years ago and that a person could repent during these long years and really change for the better. In general, a vicious circle. No one in the pardon commission is interested in whether a person has changed for the better during these long years of imprisonment. The opinion of the administration of the institution, as it turned out, is ignored. The question arises: why then, does the administration of the institution collect so many documents for each life sentenced prisoner and write an appeal if no one pays attention to it in the pardon department? It turns out that today every life-sentenced person is given a chance for pardon without a chance for its implementation. It seems that in our government there are only such principles as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. How does such torture differ from a shot in the head or in the heart? The Constitution of Ukraine (Article 27) states: «Everyone has the inalienable right to life. No one can be arbitrarily deprived of life. The duty of the state is to protect the life of a person...» It turns out that, according to this article, it is impossible to deprive a person of life, but one can bury the living.

Murder is impossible to justify. Neither the criminal nor the government can justify it, because only God gives us this life and can take it away. But at the same time, God pardons all who come to Him in repentance, including those who murdered, but the government does not. Really confessing Christian values, we will live according to the principles of the Old Testament: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth! But for whom, then, did the Lord say these words, **«I tell you that in heaven there will be more joy about one sinner repenting than ninety-nine righteous people who are not in need of repentance»** (Luke 15:7)?

What's even more sad is the situation for those who are sentenced to life imprisonment on trumped-up criminal cases. According to estimates of human rights activists, there are about a hundred people imprisoned without the slightest opportunity to appeal their sentences. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for three years already, has yet to adopt the bill 2033a, which gave at least some hope of a fair trial. It is difficult for our minds to grasp how people who were convicted unfairly are subjected to such torture. Life imprisonment without a chance for freedom, in my opinion, is incremental death. God, through His Word to all mankind, says, **«Save those who are taken to death, and will you really refuse those who are doomed to be killed?»** (Proverbs 24:11).

A life sentence for a convicted person cannot be a humane punishment if there is not even a flash of light at the end of the tunnel. Today I will go to bed again, and tomorrow if I wake up, I will thank God again and ask Him, «Am I still needed for something?»

I. GORIK.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

BBC strengthens commitment to Religion & Ethics, shining a light on faith, belief and values in Britain

Across the next 12 months the BBC will shine a light on faith, belief and values in modern Britain.

At a time when society is more diverse, more complex and more divided than ever before, the Year of Beliefs will explore the multiple expressions of faith and belief in Britain, and look at how our ethics and values shape our everyday life and personal choices.



The Year of Beliefs 2019 will bring Religion and Ethics programming to as wide an audience as possible, airing ambitious landmark series with privileged access, powerful documentaries highlighting big moral questions, spiritual journeys of self-discovery and thought-provoking discussions and debates.

Charlotte Moore, BBC Content Director, says: «With the Year of Beliefs we want to capture the complex variety of faiths and beliefs in modern Britain. Not only do we continue to offer our audiences a place they can celebrate and share their own personal beliefs, but we also want to help them understand better the meaning of other faiths and beliefs as well as exploring important ethical issues that impact so many people's lives».

<https://www.bbc.co.uk>

A parable is a metaphor or a short story, the purpose of which is to convey spiritual truth or a lesson in a more accessible form by means of analogy. The word *parable* comes from the Greek verb *paraballo*, which means *comparison, analogy, or similarity*. The principle of a good parable is to explain the meaning using things known to man, events or situations.

I. TYPES OF BIBLICAL PROVISIONS

Short parables — metaphors and sayings, for example:

Proverbs 18:10 — *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it — and is safe.*

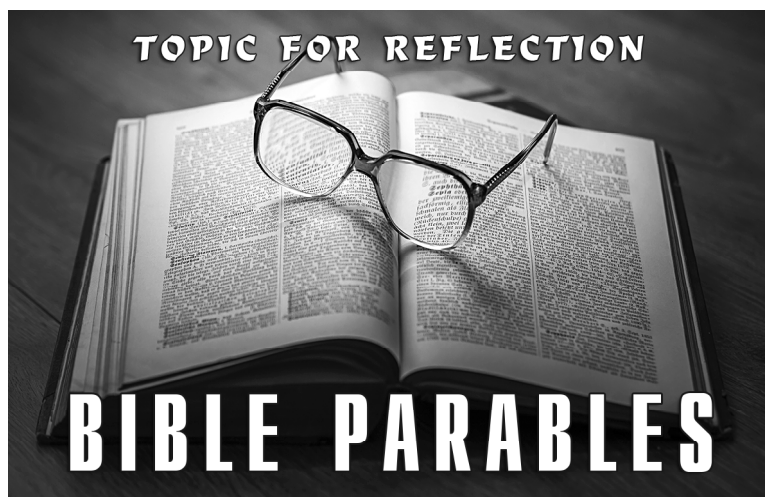
Ecclesiastes 10:1 — *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so does a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

Luke 6:39 — *He also told them a parable: Can a blind man lead a blind man? Do not both fall into a hole?*

Matthew 7:6 — *Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*

Long parables — stories. For example, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Samaritan, and others.

Jesus was a master of parables. He repeatedly used them in His teaching. However, Jesus was not the first and only biblical character to use parables.



II. EXAMPLES OF PROVERBS IN THE BIBLE

In the Old Testament

☉ Parable that Nathan told King David, when he took the wife of Uriah — Bathsheba (**2 Samuel 12:1–10**).

☉ The book of proverbs of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.

In the New Testament (parables of Jesus)

☉ Parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:30–35**).

☉ Parable of the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15:11–32**).

☉ Parable of the Sower (**Matthew 13:1–23**).

☉ Parable of the wise and foolish virgins (**Matthew 25:1–12**).

☉ **Matthew 15:21–28** (the answer of the Canaanite woman in verse 27 is a parable).

Although usually parables are understandable and easily remembered by stories and illustrations, yet we find out from Scripture that even the disciples of Jesus Christ did not always understand their spiritual meaning. Therefore, Jesus had to interpret some of his parables to the disciples. An example is the parable of wheat and weeds (**Matthew 13:24–30**) and its explanation in **Matthew 13:36–43**.

Sometimes Jesus used parables to reveal the truth to those following Him and to hide it from those who did not want to follow Him:

Mark 4:10–12 — *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, «To you it has been given to know the*

mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that «Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them».

Luke 8:9–10 — *And the disciples asked Him: What would this parable mean? He said: it is given to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, and to others in parables, so that they do not see and hear, they do not understand (we read the same in Matthew 13:10–17).*

The parables of Jesus were the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: **Isaiah 6:9–10** — *He said, «Go and tell this people: «Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving». Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed».*

Most of the parables of Jesus contain one main thought that the hearer or reader must grasp. Therefore, one should not look for a hidden meaning or «meaning» in every word, expression or sentence of a parable. For example, the meaning of the Parable of the Samaritan is that our love and compassion should extend to all people, regardless of their nationality, color or religion (**Luke 10:25–37**). But in the Parable of

the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15:11–24**), the younger (prodigal) son represents the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners, while the eldest son represents the scribes and Pharisees. The father in this parable is a good illustration of a loving and forgiving Heavenly Father.

III. PARABLES-ALLEGORIES

In addition to parables analogies and parables comparisons there are parables-allegories. These include allegories such as *the vine and branches* in **John 15:1–8**, or the *shepherd and sheep* in **John 10:1–16**, or a *house built on a stone foundation* in **Matthew 7:24–27**.

Also in the Bible there are a number of stories that modern readers regard as parables and are used to illustrate God's mercy and love and the true faith of man. Examples include the following stories:

☉ The story of a woman taken in adultery (**John 8:1–11**).

☉ The story of Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus (**Luke 7:36–50**).

☉ The story of the healing of the paralytic who was let down through the roof (**Luke 5:17–20**).

☉ The story of the healing of a woman who has suffered from bleeding for many years (**Mark 5:24–32** and **Luke 8:43–48**).

The material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada
<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/031.htm>

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

Many people ask themselves: *When will the world end?*

God created everything for eternity, but man sinned against his Creator. From the moment of the fall of man, the countdown to the end of the world began. Sin destroys the world, and if it were not for a loving God, then this world would have come to an end a long time ago.

We offer you the answers to questions about the approaching end of the world.

What is the end of the world?

1. What is the end of the world?

A. The Old Testament on the end of the world

The end of the world in the Old Testament is associated with the Day of Yahweh (**Joel 2**) — the day in which the Creator appears to judge the whole world and pay back to the righteous and the wicked according to their merits. This day is also described in **Isaiah 2:2–5**, **Joel 3:1**, **Amos 9**, **Zechariah 14**.

The end of the world is also associated with God's judgment (**Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:14**) and life after death: **Daniel 12:2–3** — *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever; Isaiah 66:22–24* — *«As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me», declares the Lord, «so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me», says the Lord. «And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind».*

B. The New Testament on the End of the World

In the New Testament, the idea of the end of the world is associated with the following:

— the great judgment (**Matthew 7:22; Revelation 6:17; Hebrews 9:27**),

— the great tribulation (**Matthew 24:21–22**),

— the second coming of Christ (**Acts 1:10–11; Matthew 24:3, 37, 39; James 5:7–8**),

— the resurrection of the dead (**John 6:39, 44, 54; 12:48**).

2. The end of what world will it be?

This will be the end of our world in which we live. Not everything that exists, but only our material world — our space and time.

Who is the ruler of this age? Satan (**2 Corinthians 4:3–4** — *And even if our gospel*

is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...). The end of this age (world) will come!

The old era will pass. The time will come of another era: in **Ephesians 1:19–21, Matthew 12:32, Luke 18:30** speaks of *this age* and the *next age*. The new era that will begin will be the era of the kingdom of God throughout the universe.

In the Revelation of John, we read: *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more (Revelation 21:1).*



3. Why should the end of the world come?

First, the end of the world must come because everything that has a beginning will surely end. Secondly, the end of the world is spoken of in the Word of God — the Bible (in the Old and New Testaments). Thirdly, the Lord Jesus himself testified of the approach of the end of the world. We will speak in detail about His testimony when we turn to the signs of the end of the world. The main thing is that God Himself warned us about the approach of the end of the world, and His word can be trusted, because it is true and unchanging.

Matthew 24:35 — *...Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

Matthew 28:20 — *...Behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.*

4. When will the end of the world be?

Matthew 24:36 — *No one knows about that day and hour, not the angels of heaven, but only My Father alone...*

Matthew 24:34 — *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be...*

Matthew 24:42–44 — *Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming,*

he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Jesus did not reveal to mankind the day on which the end of the world would come, but He gave us signs of this end, having warned in advance that this day would come unexpectedly, like snow on our heads.

5. Who will be affected by the end of the world?

The parable of Jesus about the end of the world: **Matthew 13:24–30** — *He offered them another parable, saying: The Kingdom*

of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; when the people slept, his enemy came and sowed tares between the wheat and left; when the greens came up and the fruit appeared, then the tares appeared. And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir! have you not planted good seed in your field? where did the tares come from? But he said to them: the enemy of man did it. And the slaves said to him: Do you want, we will go, pick them? But he said: no, — so that, when choosing tares, you do not pull out wheat with them, leave both to grow together before the harvest; and at the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather up the weeds first and bind them into bundles to burn them, and put the wheat in my breadbasket.

Explanation of the parable by Jesus: Matthew 13:36–43 — *Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, «Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field». He answered and said to them: «He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire,*

so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that cause to sin, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!»

Another parable of Jesus about the end of the world: **Matthew 13:47–50** — *The Kingdom of Heaven is still like a net, thrown into the sea and seizing fish of every kind, which, when it was full, was dragged ashore and, after sowing, the good was collected in vessels, and the bad was thrown out. So it will be at the end of the century: the angels will come forth, and they will separate the evil from among the righteous, and will cast them into the fiery furnace: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

We see that the end of the world will affect all people, each and every one of us. No one can hide from it or avoid the demise of the century.

Signs of the end of the world

1. Signs listed by Jesus Christ

Matthew 24:3 — *When He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him alone and asked: tell us when it will be? and what is the sign of your coming and the end of the age?* So let's see what Jesus answered to his disciples.

☉ **The appearance of false prophets: Matthew 24:4–5** — *Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in My name, and they will say, «I am the Christ», and will deceive many; Matthew 24:23–27* — *Then, if anyone says to you: «Behold, here is Christ», or «there», — do not believe. For false Christs and false prophets will rise, and will give great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect. Behold, I told you beforehand. So if they say to you, «Behold, He is in the wilderness», do not go out «Behold, He is in the secret rooms», do not believe it; for, as the lightning comes from the east and is visible even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man...*

☉ **Wars: Matthew 24:6–7** — *Also hear about wars and military rumors. Look, do not be terrified, for that should be, but this is not the end: for the people will rise against the people, and the kingdom against the kingdom...*

☉ **Hunger and earthquakes: Matthew 24:7b–8** — *...and there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places; All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

☉ **Persecution of Christians: Matthew 24:9** — *Then they will betray you to torment and kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for My name sake.*

(Continued on the 4th page)

«And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let

unfortunately, the circumstances I faced left me no choice.

My situation is this, I have no relatives and close friends left and therefore when I was freed I had nowhere to go. For several days I lived in a dilapidated house of an acquaintance with great hope to get a job as soon as possible. However, in my case, everything turned out to be very difficult. No one even temporarily wanted to hire me so that I could at least earn a living. At first, a police officer provoked me, saying, «Get ready to immediately go back as no one here is waiting for you». Then in all the

This is a small excerpt from a letter from one inmate.

Similar letters come to the editors of the «Prisoner» quite often. Re-reading such letters, saddens me. After all, society itself makes it so that former prisoners repeat crimes. At the same time, no one thinks about the fact that by far not all inmates, while committing repeated crimes, break only the glass in a kiosk and pull out several packs of cigarettes. It is an exception rather than a pattern. Usually, repeated crimes are carried out with great anger and committed more than once.

family, it is a global problem of the whole society, that is, of each of us. And while this society continues to be deaf and blind, no changes for the better will occur.

Every person in this life can make mistakes and stumble. And if we are not able to give a hand so that the stumbled can stand up, then what kind of crime reduction in society can we even talk about? One day the Lord addressed a crowd of so-called righteous people with the words: «...who among you is without sin, first cast a stone at her». What happened after these words? The following happened: the enraged crowd, from small to large, immediately dispersed, thereby fully confirming the truth of the biblical words, where it is said: «There is no righteous one...» (Romans 3:10). None of them decided to throw the first stone at the woman accused of adultery, because everyone knew their personal sins.

Today, everything happens quite differently. A free society for the most part with open contempt looks in the direction of the present and former prisoners. Surely many of them would have taken the stones in their hands and thrown in the direction of the inmates. Now, if suddenly the Lord today addressed the same words to those who are ready to throw stones in the direction of those who stumbled and are lost, it would be interesting how everything would change?

The Bible testifies to us that in that ancient time, the angry crowd of people still had a heart, after the words of the Lord, did not throw stones at the fallen woman, although by their laws she should have been stoned to death. I would like to understand how the human society has changed today, if you turn to it with a similar appeal: «...who among you is without sin, first throw a stone at her».

Analyzing the present time, I can say with confidence that a large part of today's society, without a doubt, is able to throw its stones at the fallen because they do not believe nor fear God. Yet it would be nice if, before throwing a stone, every righteous person could ask himself: «Am I perfect, or do I make mistakes as well?»

I am convinced that any society can change for the better only if people stop condemning each other and drop the stones from their hands onto the ground. The Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount said: «Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again» (Matthew 7:1-2).

Everything can be changed in this life for the better, if first of all you start by making changes in yourself. It is not by chance that the Lord also said on the Sermon on the Mount: «So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets» (Matthew 7:12).

I. GORIK.

BEING ACCEPTED

him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more» (John 8:3-11).

Unfortunately, today's society is not much different from what is mentioned in this biblical story. On the contrary, today's society not only takes the stones into its own hands, it also actively throws them, especially at those who in their opinion, are considered fallen.

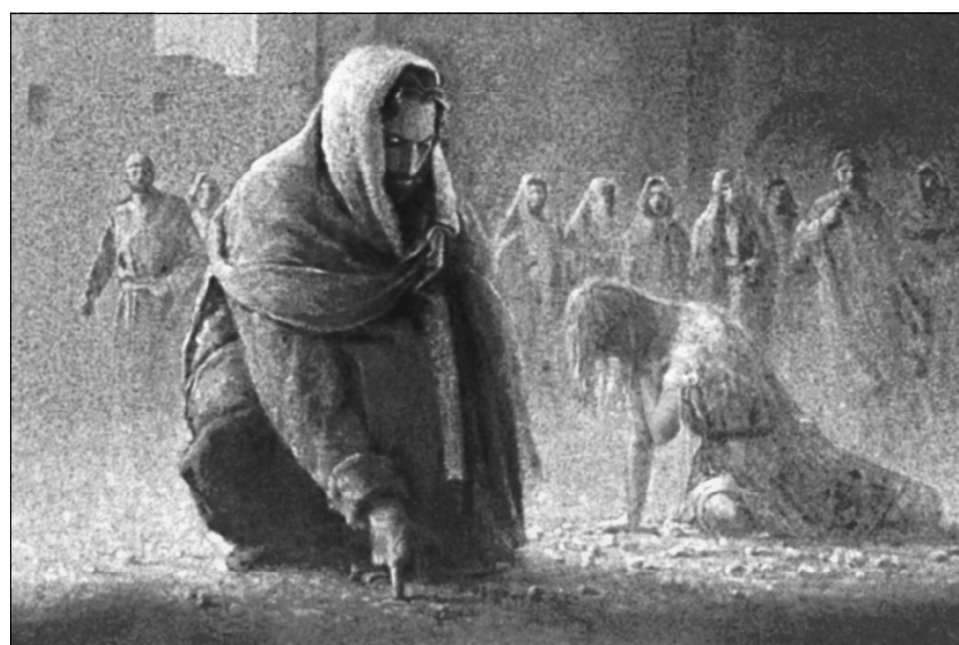
For example, everyone who is imprisoned or has been released from prison, society openly despises and in fact does not give these people a chance to start a normal life. Statistics today suggests that after being released, most of the ex-prisoners return to prisons. What is happening in our society and why the so-called fight against crime does not bring lasting results?

A very large number of letters come to our editorial office, among which there are often like the following:

Hello, dear editor
of the newspaper «Prisoner»!

I read your newspaper for the first time, when I was serving my previous term. And now I re-read it from cover to cover, because everything you say in it warms the soul and once again gives hope that all is not lost and one can still change. I'll tell you right away that the newspaper «Prisoner» is very popular in prisons. This newspaper brings people of different religious denominations together. The «Prisoner» involuntarily makes one think about his life, even those who society considers hopeless, start thinking.

I am writing a letter with gratitude for the good that you do to people. Thank you for not remaining indifferent to our problems. Honestly, I was not going to go to jail again, but



places where I applied for a job, they looked at me as if I were a leper. In general, the choices I had were limited: either to stay on the street and be homeless, or go back to prison. I chose the second option. For this it was enough to break the glass in the kiosk and pull out a few packs of cigarettes with witnesses. Considering that I have already been convicted several times, I quickly went through an investigation and received another term. Now, for several years I have been provided with a roof over my head, a place to sleep, food, and work. I wanted to get a job while free and live like a human being. I hadn't planned to commit a crime. I thought that at least this time happiness would smile at me and I would be able to live as a free being, especially since I am a high-level seamstress and have great experience in sewing craftsmanship. But, alas, no one wants people like me.

So tell me, dear editors of «Prisoner» do I really have to break the glass in the kiosk once again from hopelessness after being freed in order to acquire a roof over my head in prison, food and a bed? It turns out that even to live out your age normally, humanly, I now have no chance...

As a rule, the majority of prisoners, while still in the prisons, are well aware that no one is waiting for them at liberty, especially those who have no relatives or friends left.

Thus the question arises, how can a free society expect normal people to get released out of prison if this society does not want to accept former prisoners?

Today, many live as if the problem of crime and imprisonment will never affect their families or their loved ones. In the Holy Scripture it is written: «What a man sows, he will reap...» (Galatians 6:7). In other words, if you do evil yourself, it will surely come back like a boomerang. It is not for nothing that it is said: «He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins» (Sirach 27:30).

Perhaps, someone thinks that by not accepting former prisoners and pushing them away he thereby makes this society cleaner and safer. But if this was so, then why is this still not working? Why is crime, like the plague, striking our society all the more without the slightest hope of a better change? The answer is quite simple. The fact is that crime and prisoners is not only a problem of any

CHRISTIAN NEWS

Teen Stranded at Sea for 49 Days Turns to the Bible and Prayer to Survive

A 19-year-old boy who was stranded at sea for seven weeks said, he survived by reading his bible and heeding the advice of his parents to pray.

Indonesian teen Aldi Novel Adilang was set adrift in the Pacific Ocean while working as a lamp keeper on a floating fish trap some 80 miles off of the coast of Indonesia. Adilang had worked as a lamp keeper for three years, continuously lighting the traps lamps to attract fish. Once a week his company would come out to the floating trap to collect the fish and restock Adilang's hut with food, water and fuel.

In Mid-July, however, everything changed. Heavy winds shook the fish trap, known locally as a *rompong*, and snapped the moorings that held

it stationary, casting him adrift. Over the next 49 days, Adilang would drift thousands



of miles from home headed toward Guam, with no paddle or engine.

Within the first few days, the teen ran out of supplies and had to survive by using the hut's wood to cook fish and drinking

seawater that was filtered through his clothes to dispel of the salt.

Indonesian diplomat from the consulate in Osaka, Fajar Firdaus, told *The Jakarta Post*, «Aldi said he had been scared and often cried while adrift. Every time he saw a large ship, he said, he was hopeful, but more than 10 ships had sailed past him.

None of them stopped or saw Aldi».

Newsweek reports that at one point Adilang became so discouraged that he considered jumping into the ocean and committing suicide, but when

he remembered his parent's advice, he chose to turn to God instead.

Adilang said his parents had taught him to pray to God during times of distress, and that is exactly what he did. The teen also had a bible on board with him and he told *Tribun Manado* that the Bible along with prayer helped him get through this trying experience.

Finally, on August 31, Adilang spotted a carrier called *Arpeggio* and waved his cloth for help, this time the seamen saw Adilang too. Reportedly he also turned on his radio signal, hoping the captain would pick it up. Soon the captain saw the boy and turned the vessel around. The captain circled Adilang four times and according to Fajar,

«Aldi then decided to jump into the sea to grab the rope, while the waves and wind rocked him... The ship's crew managed to catch his hand».

Adilang was handed over to Indonesian consulate officials in Japan on September 6 and was flown home to Manado, Indonesia, two days later.

Indonesian consul general in Osaka Mirza Nurhidayat, told *The Jakarta Post* that Adilang is doing well and is in good health.

«Aldi's story is indeed dramatic, and we are thankful to all, the ship's captain and the Japanese authorities that have been very helpful in ensuring Aldi's return», Mirza said.

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TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

(Ending. Beginning on the 2nd page)

☉ **Appearance of false prophets, faith diminishing:** **Matthew 24:10-11** — *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many.*

☉ **Lawlessness increasing and love diminishing:** **Matthew 24:12-13** — *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

☉ **The good news is preached throughout the whole earth:** **Matthew 24:14** — *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

☉ **Great Tribulation:** **Matthew 24:15-22** — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.*

☉ **The great cataclysms, the sign of Jesus in heaven:** **Matthew 24:29-31** — *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; Mark 13:24-25* — *But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.*

II. PRINCIPLES PROVIDED BY THE APOSTLES OF JESUS

1. **Paul.** Jesus Christ came and died on the cross at the very end of the world: **Hebrews 9:26b** — *...now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away, sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* The very first sign of the approach of the end of the world is considered the fact that God came to earth in the form of a man in order to pay for the sins of humanity with His death and give people forgiveness and salvation in Christ. This only confirms the theory that God's great judgment has already begun. Now is the time of grace — the time when God has mercy on all who come to Him for forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. As it is written in **2 Corinthians 6:2b**, *...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

2. **Peter.** He warns us that in the last day there will be scoffers: **2 Peter 3:3-7** — *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

In apostle Peter's opinion, who are the scoffers? These are people who do not believe in the end of the world. Why don't they believe in it? Because they do not believe in the beginning; they do not believe that God gave a start to everything, that the Lord God created the universe, the earth and everything that fills it. That is why they do not believe that God has appointed an end to everything. See, what an interesting pattern exists in human reasoning: disbelief in the beginning gives rise to disbelief in the end.

So, back to the question of who the scoffers are. Do they have a name? There is a name, and even several names. One of

them is evolutionists. These are people who adhere to a religion called the «theory of evolution». They believe that life in space and the cosmos itself are the result of spontaneous generation and evolution from simple to complex. Evolutionists still believe that everything in the world is committed to progress; they deny the idea of the Last Judgment and the end of the world. It is about them that apostle Peter warns us.

Did you know that more than 200 years ago no one could even think that such false teaching as the theory of evolution would be taught in all countries of the world. Friends, this only proves that we are close to the end of the world!

3. **Paul's letter to Timothy about the last days:** **2 Timothy 3:1-5** — *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded,*



lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Paul warns Timothy, a young minister, about the progressive degradation of morality and ethics in substance before the very end of the world. This degradation is now visible as never before. One has only to see what we are shown on TV today and compare it with what was shown 10, 15, 20 years ago. What was considered indecent in the 1960s was already perceived as normal in the 1970s. What seemed indecent and depraved in the 1970s was not considered as such by the 1980s. What was television pornography in the 1980s, shocks no one today and not only that but does not cause even the slightest negative reaction today. Dear friends, our morals are corrupted to the limit. This also indicates the approach of the end of the world.

4. **John speaks about the end time:** **1 John 2:18-19, 22** — *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us... Who is a liar but he that denied that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denied the Father and the Son. Over the past decades, a huge number of so-called biblical cults have emerged — sects, the teachings of which are based on some perverted biblical truths. The founders of all these sects left the bosom of the Christian church in due time and, having perverted the Christian teaching, went after their own delusions and spiritual complexes. Each of these sects claims to be the true church of Jesus Christ, but is a false church, spreading false teaching.*

5. **The letter of Judas:** **Jude 1:17-19** — *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

6. **Paul's message to the Thessalonians (proclamation of peace and security):** **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3** — *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

Theologians suggest that after the time of wars and terror, suddenly the world will be restored to the world, which will be established by the antichrist, who reigns at the head of the world government. And just at that moment, when world peace will be proclaimed, then the end of the world will come.

III. ADDITIONAL EXAMINATIONS

1. **What is the time of the end of the world?**

A. **The days before the Flood**
Luke 17:26-27 — *And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.*

B. **With the days of Lot (Sodom and Gomorrah)**

Luke 17:28-30 — *Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went*

out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus, shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

2 **Peter 2:4-10** — *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

2. **Israel's Appeal**
Matthew 23:39 — *For I say to you: from now on you will not see Me, until you exclaim, «Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!» (See also Luke 13:35).*

Also pay attention to **Luke 21:24** (*Jerusalem will be trampled upon by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are finished*) and compare this with **Romans 11:25** (*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*).

Israelites' conversion to Jesus Christ is probably the latest sign of the approaching end of the world. This will be the time when the eyes of the Jews will open, and they will realize that Jesus of Nazareth, crucified 2000 years ago, is the great Lord of heaven and earth, who came to earth in human form, that He is the promised Messiah, whom they did not recognize. That's when they will cry to the Lord, they will call upon His name, and He will come.

Will it be a time when Christianity becomes the official religion of Israel, or will it be a time when most Jews convert to Christianity, we do not know. We only know that they will call upon the name of Him pierced (**John 19:37**).

The most interesting thing is that in recent years more Jews have converted to Christianity than in all previous hundreds of years. This only confirms the fact that

the end of the world is approaching us with inexorable speed.

IV. WHY WERE WE GIVEN CLUES ABOUT THE END OF THE EARTH?

1. God does not want us — His children — to be in ignorance. Just as He revealed the secret of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to Abraham (**Genesis 18:17**), He does not want to conceal this from us.

2. So that we can recognize the approximation of the end of the world by signs.

Matthew 24:32-33 — *Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.*

3. So that people, seeing the signs of the end of the world coming true, believe in the approaching of the end of the world, and therefore believe God's warning about the end of the world, and believe in Jesus and God.

4. So that people, seeing the approach of the end of the world, reflect on the meaning of their life and on what awaits them after death.

Compare all these signs with our reality, and you will see that the end of the world is just around the corner.

Is it possible to somehow avoid the end of the world?

1. **The end of the world is inevitable**

The end of the world cannot be prevented. The Lord has already appointed a time when He will come to judge the world: **Acts 17:31** — *Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.*

And the word of God is unshakable. What he promised, He will fulfill: **Matthew 24:35** — *...heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass.*

So the end of the world is coming. And when the time comes, the day of the Lord will come, as a thief at night, and then the heavens will pass away noisily, and the elements, burning, will collapse, the earth and all things will burn on it (**2 Peter 3:10**).

2. **How can you prepare for the end of the world?**

A legitimate question arises: *If it is impossible to prevent or somehow avoid the end of the world, how can one prepare for it?* Jesus Himself has already answered this question:

Matthew 24:42-44 — *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered, his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

The Lord calls us to be awake, that is, to get out of spiritual hibernation, to stop thinking only about the earthly and to think about the eternal, imperishable, which is our own soul.

Mark 8:36-37 — *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Acts 17:30 — *So leaving the times of ignorance, God now commands people everywhere to repent...*

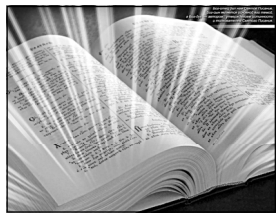
Mark 1:15 — *...repent and believe in the gospel.*

Acts 2:38 — *...repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

John 3:16-18 — *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world was saved through Him. The one who believes in him is not judged, but the unbeliever is already condemned because he did not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

3. **Consider the question: Am I ready for the end of the world?**

The material for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada
<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/067.htm>



PASTOR'S WORD

WHY IS THE LORD'S PATH UNCLEAR FOR PEOPLE?

Sometimes newly converted Christians are in awe of God and of the changes that are going on in their lives. They beat themselves up for not becoming a Christian sooner and because of this, they lose a chunk of their life in vain. Burning with the desire to share their new-found happiness, they turn to everyone who would listen to them to try to help them find the happiness that they themselves have found. But, to their great disappointment, everyone whom they turn to are simply deaf to the good news. Some listeners don't believe and they make fun of the believer's faith. Why does this happen? What can be done to help these individuals? Why do these listeners not believe? There is a category of unbelievers who say to believers: «You guys have it good. You are happy because you can simply believe but I can't do that». Is it true that they simply can't believe or is it just an excuse? It seems so simple: open your heart to God, ask Him in prayer for help and enjoy your new happy life! Unfortunately, it's not so simple for some. I want to share some thoughts about this topic and analyze it a bit. Why don't all people believe in God? Why do many not see the path to happiness? I will talk about some of the things that may be stopping people from believing, and steps to believing.

People who are strongly preoccupied with something in their life

These people are so occupied that they don't hear or see anything that might save their eternal souls. These people can be compared to a wood grouse. By the way a wood grouse has excellent hearing which makes it practically impossible to sneak up on. However, during the mating season the wood grouse starts to sing the mating call so loudly that he cannot hear anything else around him. While the grouse is singing song after song, a hunter can easily sneak up on it and catch it with his bare hands. Some people are like the wood grouse, so occupied with their hopes and dreams that they lose track of the surrounding reality. They do not want to hear anything that doesn't have to do with their hopes. Their hopes are vile and are all focused on this temporary earthly life. They become the prey of their desire for earthly things and die spiritually without knowing God or the purpose of life. **Mark 4:18-19** (ESV) — *And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

Those that do not want to change their lifestyle because they like it

People in this category might even believe the good news of salvation and may even be sympathetic to Christians and their way of life. However, they stay unchanged in their lifestyle because they have fallen in love with it. These are the people that do not want to give their life to God. They feel like they are the masters of their fate and happiness. Until their ambitions crash and burn, and they become

disillusioned, it is very difficult for them to entrust God with their lives so that they will be filled with higher purpose (**2 Timothy 4:10**).

John 8:43-44 (ESV) — *Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.*

Those who simply cannot believe

These people believe that the Gospel is a fairytale. They ask the question: «How can this be? How can these fairytales help anyone? One must be either a child or mentally delayed to believe this. I am not one of these people».

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV) — *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Matthew 11:25-26 (ESV) — *At that time Jesus declared, «I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will».*

Proud people

These people see that people who believe are happier, more satisfied, and more productive in society. However, they do not like the method of salvation itself. They are unable to save themselves from their evil habits and try to become good people by their own power. In order to be saved, they need to call for outside help — God's help. They believe that doing this will cause their self-worth to fall! Instead of turning to a gracious God, they think: «How many unbelievers are there? It cannot be that all of them perish! Its impossible that all unbelievers will go to hell! This cannot happen! Let whatever happens to them, happen to me».

Matthew 18:2-4 (ESV) — *And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, «Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven».*

Path to knowing God

So what should people do? Is it worth to try to seek God if it is so difficult? Plus, there are so many different religions! Go figure which one is right! A whole lifetime will not be enough to figure out which one of them is true!

But this appears so only at first glance... everything is quite different in reality. God gives a person many opportunities to get to know Him.

Many biographies of famous people include stories of situations in which these individuals closely felt the presence of God. Some found God through studying nature, the cosmos; others — by pondering about the purpose of

human life. Yet others found God after they considered the presence of a conscience and the innate feelings of right and wrong. These ponderings led many to find the Creator.

However, if the knowledge of God depended solely on one's mental capabilities then all scientists and academics would be the first ones lining up to enter into the God's Kingdom and all the mentally disabled and not-so-smart people would be going to hell. But God is just! It is interesting to note that Jesus chose His disciples not based on their IQ or their academic achievements. He can make those who are weak-strong and those who are not wise-spiritually wise! People understand God not with their brain but with their heart and faith. The same happens right now. Smart people may not understand the Gospel, but simple people believe with all their heart and are saved. Even Apostle Paul spoke about this: **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** (ESV) — *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*

It is interesting to note that people who suffered from illnesses or various hardships in

that shake things up and sifts away everything that hinders one in seeking the main human purpose in order to help focus one's attention on what is truly important.

«Only God can fill the vacuum in the heart of every person. Nothing that is created by humans will ever be able to fill this vacuum. Only God, whom we discover through Jesus Christ is able to fill this void. The knowledge of God without the knowledge of one's own sinfulness leads to pride. The knowledge of one's own sinfulness without the knowledge of God leads to despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ however, brings one onto the right path because in Him we find knowledge of God and of our own sinfulness» — Blaise Pascal, mathematician.

Not even righteous people completely understood God

Sometimes people of different nationalities meet and are unable to understand each other due to not knowing the other's language. And when similar people (in appearance, needs) but born in different countries are unable to understand each other, is it surprising that man cannot understand God? God was sometimes misunderstood and doubted in His justness by even Biblical figures such as Moses, Job, Jeremiah (**Exodus 33:13**; **Job 21:6-15**; **Jeremiah 12:1**;

Jeremiah 12:1 (ESV) — *Righteous are you, O LORD, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?*

It is not strange then when a Christian is not always able to understand God; why He is the way that He is and why He acts the way He does. The Bible says that human thinking is very different from God's thinking: **Isiah 55:8-9** (ESV) — *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Concepts that are difficult to grasp with our human mind include: the concept of the Trinity, God's predestination, the division of the evil people from the good, and the end of the world.

How can the two diametrically opposed ideas of a free human will and God's predestination for a person's life coexist in harmony? How is it that God knows ahead of time what a person will choose and what will happen to a person even with the existence of a free will with which a person can choose freely? What should we do when our brain hits a dead-end in the attempts to understand and grasp such concepts? Wait up, even the Bible talks about the limitations of the human mind!

Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV) — *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Psalms 130:1 (ESV) — *O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.*

From the days of the fall of man there has existed a barrier to knowing God with our human mind and human logic. God is greater than our mind can comprehend and only those who have been born again and have a relationship with Him are able to understand Him more.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 (ESV) — *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to*

understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. «For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?» But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (ESV) — *We know that «We all possess knowledge.» But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.*

The more a Christian is transformed by Christ's teaching and the more they apply it in their every-day life, the more these questions which before were conflicting with their human logic, will become clear and harmonious. Thank the Lord!

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



Engraving of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

their life become more open to receiving God versus the people who are busy in pursuit of earthly goals.

Dead ends in a person's life are conducive to seeking God. When all of a person's capabilities run out, then there is no more hope left that he himself or someone else will aid him. This happens to individuals who have terminal illnesses, physical disabilities, who are depressed, or who are deeply disillusioned with their life: when all earthly things lose their pull on a person. Why is this? Is this due to the fact that in despair a person loses interest in everyday things that usually dominate our attention and focuses more of their attention on the truly important things in life? The person's spirit rises up and they lose the burden earthly worries. This is the reason why sometimes in a person's life moments come

Psalms 72:1-23. These were the people who had the honor of speaking with God and knowing Him very closely! Moses asked God to reveal to him God's path, that is, he wanted to know God more: **Exodus 33:13** (ESV) — *...if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight...*

Righteous Job, King Solomon, and the prophet Jeremiah all doubted God's justness:

Job 21:7 (ESV) — *Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?*

Ecclesiastes 8:14 (ESV) — *There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous.*

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

I DECIDED TO SERVE THE LORD

My name is Igor. I am thirty-four years old, and I'm from the city of Khmelnytskyi (Ukraine). I want to testify about what God has done in my life.

I began to learn the harsh reality of this world from an early age. When I was sixteen, I tried drugs for the first time. Back then I did not know the horror that would later come into my life because of this. At that moment I stopped learning in school, all my thoughts and energy was on where to get the money for my next dose of pleasure. Naturally, I turned to criminal activity and the consequences came quickly.

I was tried in court about ten times but I served only two sentences for my crimes. Then illnesses came into my life and I also lost my relationship with people close to me. I remained in this world without love, support or hope that something in my life could change. I was dying, I even tried to commit suicide.

For eleven years of my empty, senseless, addict life, I repeatedly tried to free myself from it all but I did not

succeed. I even went through treatment several times in a psychiatric hospital.

I learned about a rehabilitation center from an old acquaintance who himself was a drug addict in the past. In this center I received physical healing and was miraculously freed from my addictions. And it was here that I learned what real love is — without deception and hypocrisy. In this place the Lord began to change my heart and my life. He began to restore order in all areas of my life. The Lord also began to fulfill my innermost desires. He gave me everything I needed for a new life and I really am grateful for that. Therefore, I decided to serve the Lord God and help people with the same past as mine. I thank Him for all the brothers and sisters who prayed for me and who gave me their love. Glory to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Igor SERVATSINSKY, Ukraine,
<http://nazarenevn.com.ua>



I was born in an ordinary family. My parents were wonderful people and they always took care of me but unfortunately my childhood came to an early end. I started smoking art age ten and at eleven I was drinking. I experienced alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, substance abuse, drives to the police station, and mothers' tears as a result of my state. It was like this until I was nineteen years old. Then I heard about heroin... By that time, I already had one hundred percent dependence on everything I used.

So, without thinking twice I decided to try heroin. The worst part of my life began. At that time I had only one purpose: to find money for the next dose. After a while I realized that I needed to somehow get rid of the addiction but neither treatment nor anything else helped. Every day it was getting worse and worse: I could not work anymore; I was stealing things from home. Soon after, my father passed away and mom seemed to be growing older by the day. Six years went by and my friends and acquaintances began to die one by one. Not all by drugs, some ran away from the police and fell off a roof, another was killed, and yet another was hit by a car. Many were imprisoned for long sentences. Initially, there was a group of 8 of us who were good friends and I alone remained alive by Gods mercy.

Without drugs life was unbearable. If I didn't take a dose, I couldn't go anywhere I would just sit at home and go crazy.

At that time, I began to attend esoteric groups. I was familiar with a few people who were fond of esotericism and Indian philosophy. I would take a dose of drugs and go. I listened to different lectures there. It seemed that what they were talking about was good, about love, mercy, and I was very impressed. However, my life did not change. At a certain time a leaflet with the address to a Christian Rehabilitation Center was placed into my hands and I went there for three years. I felt revived thought then that I was free from addictions. I Got a job, went on a business trip to

Omsk. I lived there and worked and soon again began to drink every day. I could not live differently.

In Omsk, I met my future wife. I started dating her and grew madly in love. I was astonished that she even went for me. At some point she came with me to Salavat. We went to the registry office and got married.

A few years later our daughter Masha was born. I thought it would somehow affect me. Thought I would

her begged on my knees: «Keep the child...» I constantly said: «We will go to church». This was my only lifeline. She gave birth to our son, but nothing changed in my life. There was no peace in my family because of my drunkenness.

After another two-day spree my wife told me that she no longer wanted to have any relationship with me and that she would soon leave.

I understood perfectly well that I was about to lose my

At first, we went to church not to find Christ, reconcile, or have salvation, but simply to have peace at home and for me to quit drinking. But once while sitting in the kitchen I prayed and I began to clearly understand (the Lord revealed to me): Christ died, not only so that there would peace in my family and I would quit drinking and smoking but so that we could all reconcile with God and know Him. So that I could praise the Lord, seek Him,

learned that I now believe in God. They would say, «Vova, what are you, God's dandelion or something?» I even had such a moment were my heart was pounding and I was angry and could not answer. I ran away, upset that they made fun of me in such a way. I opened the Bible on my phone and saw the following verses there: «Pray for those who curse you and persecute you».

Then I honestly said: «Lord, I hate them so much! I

WHAT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE IS POSSIBLE FOR GOD



live and be happy. But that was not the case, instead I had a desire to drink to hang out. I wouldn't come home for two full days. I am ashamed to even remember it now. After all, I earned pennies and somehow still managed to take a considerable part of this money to drink. I cried, worried and understood that I was doing terrible things, that I had a family, but I could not help myself.

My wife hated me, and I was annoyed that she could not understand me. Although in fact she forgave me so many times... Then my wife became pregnant with our second child. At that moment she was totally against keeping the child, I persuaded

family and but at the same time I could not do anything with myself.

Fortunately at that time I was knew one Christian family and saw genuine joy in them and a healthy way of life: they did not smoke, they did not drink, they are always together, they have three children. Looking at this family, my wife and I began to go to church, we began to read the Bible through which we learned about Jesus Christ and also began to communicate with believers. There, among other people, I saw people like me, ex-drunkards, ex-drug addicts, who now lived a completely different life, and this very much inspired me.

live, be filled, be led by Him and have the hope for eternal life! The Lord came to deliver us from the bondage of sin. And this is was all clearly revealed to me: He died for our sins, was resurrected, and saves by faith. And then I involuntarily said in my mind: «Lord, thank you for everything!»

Soon smoking and drinking no longer interested me. Previously, I did not see a future at all, I thought a sober life was not for me. But now I clearly understand that it is the Lord that sets us free from all that is bad and evil. No one could do this except God.

At work, at first there were difficulties when the men

am ready to nail them, just by my nature I cannot wish them well now, but according to Your word I pray to Thee so that they will be saved and see that You are the living God!» After that, I was filled with such joy and love of God that when I returned I shouted: «Guys, this is life in Christ! This is life!» And they answered me: «Vova, Vova, what are you? Everything is fine, quiet down».

Soon after, my wife became pregnant with Zhenya, there was no longer any question of having an abortion, because the Lord had completely changed our lives. He burst into it, like a train at high speed, and smashed all evil into dust: horrors, fears, distrust, doubts, jealousy. By Gods miracle I got a job that was impossible to get with my past. Now I have a convenient schedule, I can spend time with my family and have a desire to run home to my dear children...

How many times could I have died from drugs, from substance abuse and from all the terrible things that happened in my life! However, God's love has no limits.

God is real! Just like two thousand years ago, He continues to perform His miracles and His work. Both me and my family are witnesses to this.

Vladimir KROTOV,
Salavat, Bashkortostan,
Russia,
www.salavatchurch.com

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My name is Tatyana, I'm forty-five years old. Right now, I am a happy person, but it took me a very long time to get to this day.

I was born in 1973 into a fairly wealthy family. My mom at that time was seventeen years old. I didn't know my father. My mom herself was still a child, so my grandmother was the one bringing me up until I was ten years old. But she also had a busy schedule at work, so her upbringing was limited by daycare and then school. Indeed, in Soviet times, many were convinced that raising children was the responsibility of educators and teachers. In general, I grew up with the understanding that nobody needs me. I felt a void inside of me, which I tried to

one then explained to me that baptism is not a magic wand that would save me from all my troubles right away.

My mother, while I was in prison, moved from Kyiv to live in a village. From my daughter's letters, I learned that her grandmother did not treat her very well and allowed her to be raped by my stepfather at ten and a half years old, as I once was. After that, my daughter ran away to live with her teacher. Due to the fact that my mother drank, the teacher sent my daughter to a boarding school. Now I thank God that at that time I was in prison because my next term would probably have been for life...

Through reading the New Testament, God began to work with my heart. And

after my release, I moved away from God, the feeling of emptiness returned to me and I began to drink. But I thank God that when I turned away from Him, He did not turn away from me. God sent a person along my path who brought me to the wonderful Christian organization Teen Challenge, to the Coffee House service for dependent people. I began to attend the service. Through people, God showed me that He is alive and always near me, but the devil did not want to let me go, and I began to drink again. Because of alcohol, I had to go to the hospital and get a diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver, with the opinion of the doctors that I would no longer live in this world for a long time. Lying on a hospital bed, I realized that I



LIVING WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

fill as I could. I started smoking and drinking alcohol early. I tried to find understanding with my mother and her boyfriends (at that time I was ten years old, and I moved to live with her from my grandmother's). My mother's boyfriends understood me in their own way, and I was raped when I was ten and a half years old. Until the age of twenty, I lived as I myself wanted: I drank, smoked, changed partners like gloves, according to the season. And all this time I felt lonely and misunderstood. I was looking for love, understanding and acceptance of myself for who I am. At twenty-one, I got married and gave birth to a wonderful girl, but the feeling of emptiness and loneliness did not pass. I started drinking again. After a while, my husband also began to drink. At thirty-one, I murdered my husband and went to prison for ten years. I served my term in the Black Sea Correctional Colony (No. 74) of the Odessa region. My mom took my child for the duration of my term. Being in a colony, I gradually began to wonder why I live and what is the meaning of my life. I learned about God in my childhood from my grandmother, but God seemed to me something far away and inaccessible. Many believers came to our colony, but I looked at them as if they were aliens. In my understanding, believers were limited in everything. However, over time, the desire to read the New Testament and receive baptism came to me, too. True, in my understanding, baptism meant that the black stripe in my life would stop. No



when I was free (and I was freed before my full term had passed, after serving only seven and a half years) and came to my mother, I was able to talk normally with her and with my stepfather. Having lived for some time with my mother, I moved to Kyiv, because I wanted to improve my life, get a job and pick up my daughter from the boarding school. When I arrived in Kyiv, I hardly moved into my apartment, since tenants lived there and did not want to move out, arguing that I was not the one that had rented the apartment out and therefore could not evict them. A policeman helped me move into mine and my daughter's apartment. I got a job and took my daughter from the boarding school. It seemed as if everything began to improve, but since

did not want to die because of a bottle of vodka. I didn't have money for treatment, I was fired from work, and all my acquaintances turned away from me. I called my friend, and he told me one word, which turned my life around. He said, «Pray».

And I began to pray. After this prayer miracles began to happen. An acquaintance, for whom vodka was in the first place, brought me money to buy medication, and after going through all the medical tests my terrible diagnosis was not confirmed. It sounded softer: «toxic hepatitis», which, naturally, was curable.

Some time later, I again resumed my visits to the Coffee House services. Through the wonderful head of the Coffee House, Sergey Glushko, God brought me to church, where I was baptized a second time, with the understanding that baptism is not just washing the body with water, but a covenant with God, a promise to live with a clear conscience. The Lord gave me wonderful friends, He gave me a large family of believers (sisters and brothers). He showed me that I have a voice and I can sing. Now I sing in the choir of praise in my church. God also gave me a wonderful job with a good salary and removed the emptiness from inside of me. Now I feel like a happy person, and all this thanks to God. It's as if He erased my old life and gave me a new one, in which I rejoice in every day and thank God for every passing day. With God everything is possible!

Tatyana POHITALYUK, Ukraine.

THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OUT

My name is Dmitry. I am forty-four years old. I want to talk about the glory of God in my life.

I am a former drug addict. I spent fourteen years in prisons. I say this not for the sake of boasting, but so that people understand that drug addiction is not a problem of poor or mentally retarded people. It is a grief that can affect every family, every person, regardless of their status or financial situation. I think many of you know that.

I grew up in a happy family. I graduated school with honors. I then entered a military music school. I received the profession of a military conductor.

In 1992 I went to serve in the army, and in 1994, as part of the peacekeeping force, I went to Yugoslavia. There was a war, and that is where drugs appeared in my life.

When I returned home, the dashing nineties were happening: markets, rackets, kiosks, and so on. Friends who paid off the army were sitting in these very kiosks, some in the brigades, but I was just a restless person.

Six months passed, I received my first term. I lowered my hands and humbled myself. I remember I wanted only one thing — to die free.

In 2011, the Lord sent me a believer, A. S. Moseychuk. He was the one who sent me to a rehabilitation center, which is how I ended up in rehab.

The Lord surrounded me with very good people. Through them, He changed my callous heart. Then the Lord gave me a family. Now I have a beautiful wife and four children.

I have never suffered from serious illnesses. I do not have HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis. I don't even have a medical card. However, when my wife was giving birth to our third child, I had a stroke. But a week after some treatment, I was already kneeling in church and praising God. Therefore, there was a clear understanding of where the Lord pulled me out from and where I would be without Him.

Now I live a full life, raising children and helping those people who are in the same problems that I was in not so long ago. I understand them. Praise the Lord that there is a way out! And glory to Him that there are people who are not indifferent to the problems of other people.

Today I go to city executive committees, HIV centers, places where methadone programs are held, and I also visit police stations where people are registered. I tell people about the Lord, about His mercy, love for us, about His sacrifice and redemption. I talk about how He saved me from drugs, imprisonment and death.

I myself am from Donetsk, I came from there in 2016. During all the hostilities, I was there, serving. And there was no fear: I knew that the Lord was with me — and He protected me.

I have no classmates or friends left. They're all in a graveyard. Some overdosed, some drank themselves to death, and some were killed. It was different for everyone. And I am alive. And I know for sure that I live by the grace of God, according to His will.

I constantly thank the Lord for a new life, for a family, for being able to serve people. I want to tell everyone that there is always a way out. Just choose the Lord and live with Him!

Dmitry GOLIKOV, Ukraine,
<http://revival.kiev.ua>

LIBERATION AND REHABILITATION

My name is Dmitry, I'm forty-two years old. I was born and lived in a normal, self-sufficient family. I studied normally. I really loved sports and was athletic. I won prizes and was the champion of the region in my category. By the age of fourteen I was at the adult level in weightlifting

At school I used my authority, but this was not enough for me. Thinking that cigarettes, alcohol and drugs would make me more mature and stronger, I started to use it all.

Just as I had advanced in sports, I began to advance in addiction: from lighter to heavier drugs. Cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and eventually opium. At the age of fifteen my sporting career ended, and the career of an opium addict began. One evening, my friend and I tried opium, the sensations were indescribable.

At eighteen, I was already completely addicted to drugs. To get away from it, I decided to go to the army. It is not clear how, but I found it there too. After finishing my service, I came home at twenty. Even then, I realized that I was in deep dependence, but could not do anything. When I was twenty-one, my friend died from an overdose. At that funeral, I sobbed and cursed the drug, but I went for another dose after. A year later, another friend (classmate) died: he hanged himself because of opium, after which I again sobbed, but also continued to take the drug.

At twenty-four, I was already a drug addict with several sentences. I was prosecuted four times and was once in prison. I repeatedly tried to be treated in order to escape from this hell, but nothing worked. My parents looked with horror as I carried everything out of the house, how I cooked drugs at home, but could not do anything. As a result, my mother kicked me out of the house and completely abandoned me, like all my relatives.

I had nowhere to live, nothing to eat. I lived with other users, and stole from my home at night, from the garden: apples, pears and nuts. Abscesses appeared. Fleas nibbled me till I was bleeding. I learned from my friend that he believed in Jesus, who freed him from his addiction. Grabbing onto this testimony, I decided to go to a rehabilitation center. And there, God miraculously freed me from all addictions thanks to just one prayer from the brothers. I was pleasantly surprised. After going through the rehabilitation, I stayed to serve in the center.

After some time, a subpoena came from the court for my old sins and deeds. Already being a believer, I received a



term of four years. In 2005 I was released, leaving a small church (about forty people) in prison. My best Christian years are at the rehabilitation center and the prison. After my release, I came to my church, where I was born and raised. At thirty-three, I met my wife Alyona. One and a half years after our wedding, we had a daughter, Kira, and a year later, our daughter, Eve. And today I have a wonderful family. God also gave me the opportunity to do business and serve Him in prisons. I am grateful to God for that.

Dmitry SIRACHEV, Ukraine,
<http://nazarenevn.com.ua>

INTRODUCTION

Many people who recently started studying the Bible ask the same question: «Where did Cain's wife come from?» Some of them believe that in order for Cain to find a wife, other «races» of people must have been present on earth at that time, who in their origin would not have been descendants of Adam and Eve. This means that the Bible's statement that Adam and Eve were the only people God created was not true.

For many people, this question is a stumbling block. Faced with it, they refuse to believe not only in the Book of Genesis, but also the record that at the beginning of history there were only one man and one woman on earth.

However, there are no contradictions in the Bible. We have a motto in the club: «If something in the Bible is not clear to us, this does not mean that the Bible is wrong or inaccurate. This means only one thing: that we do not understand something».

All people are descendants of two people created by God: Adam and Eve. Cain and his wife are descendants of Adam and Eve. And now we will explain it.

Genesis 4:16–17 says: *And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.*

A question arises: «Where did Cain find his wife?»

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



it turns out that the first men had to marry their own sisters, because there were simply no other women!

We do not know when Cain married. No details are given about other marriages and children. But it can be assumed that Cain's wife was his sister, niece, or other close relative.

III. THE OBJECTIONS OF SKEPTICS

1. God's Law

Some, when they hear that the first generations of people married their sisters, are surprised and say that this is impossible. To this I would like to say that Adam, actually, married his rib. But for some reason this does not surprise anyone.

Others argue that the children of Adam and Eve could not marry each other, because there are laws prohibiting marriages between close relatives.

Still others say that marrying a relative shouldn't be done. To such people I want to remind that if you are not married to a relative, you are not marrying a person at all.

The closer the relationship of two people, the higher the possibility of having the same errors in their genes obtained from the same parents. Therefore, a brother and sister are likely to have the same errors in their genetic information. A child born of a sister-to-brother marriage will inherit one set of genes from each parent. And due to similar errors in the genes of the parents, these disorders are duplicated in the genetic code of the offspring and the result will be deformities among these children.

On the contrary, the further the relationship of parents, the higher the likelihood that their genes will not carry the same mistakes. Children inheriting one set of genes from each parent are likely to get a good gene in each pair with a bad gene. Usually a good gene dominates over a bad one, and thus, deformity (at least, serious) is suppressed. For example, instead of fully deformed ears, the ears will only be slightly deformed. (In general, however, the human race is gradually degenerating, accumulating the mistakes of generation after generation).

However, this fact of today's life does not apply to Adam and Eve. The first two people were created perfect. Everything created by God was, according to God, *very good* (**Genesis 1:31**). This means that their genes were perfect, without errors! But when sin entered the world (because of Adam — **Genesis 3:6**), God cursed the world and the perfect creation began to degenerate, get sick, grow old and die. For a long period of time, this process

WHERE DID CAIN'S WIFE COME FROM?

To answer this question, we first need to figure out how many people God created on earth: two people (Adam and Eve), or were there many more?

I. THE FIRST PEOPLE

1. Adam — the first person

The Old Testament tells us that God first created Adam from the dust of the earth, and then created Eve from Adam's rib. However, Genesis is not the only place in the Bible that tells us about the first people. In **Romans 5:12**, it says: *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* And in **1 Corinthians 15:45**, it says that Adam was the first person: *...the first man Adam was made a living soul...*

2. We are all relatives

According to the Bible, all people are relatives. **Acts 17:26** — *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.* All people, except Eve, are the descendants of the first man — Adam.

3. Eve — the first woman

Eve was created from Adam's rib: **Genesis 2:21–22** — *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.*

In **Genesis 3:20**, we read: *And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.* In other words, all people, except Adam, are descendants of Eve. She was the first woman.

In the New Testament, Jesus (**Matthew 19:4–6**) and Paul (**Ephesians 5:31**) use this historical event as the basis for marriage between one man and one woman.

Also, in **Genesis 2:20** it says that when Adam looked at all the living beings created by God, he could not find a helper like him, like a person. All this makes it very obvious that **from the very beginning only one woman was present — Eve, Adam's wife.**

So, it turns out that nowhere in the Bible is it written that God created some other people besides Adam and Eve. This means that all people who ever existed on earth are descendants of the first two people: Adam and Eve.

II. THE NEXT GENERATION

1. Who was Cain?

Cain was the child of Adam and Eve, which is written about in **Genesis 4:1**: *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.* Together with his brothers Abel (**Genesis 4:2**) and Seth (**Genesis 4:25**), he was part of the first generation of children ever born on earth.

2. Cain's brothers and sisters

Although the names of only three sons are mentioned in Holy Scriptures, Adam and Eve had other children. This is evident in **Genesis 5:4**: *And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters.*

In **Genesis 5:5**, it says that Adam lived 930 years: *And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.* How many children do you think Adam and Eve could have had over the years? The Guinness Book of World Records states that the record holder for the greatest number of children from one woman is a Russian woman who lived in the beginning of the XIX century and gave birth to 58 children in her 63 years. Just think: 58 children in 63 years! And Adam and Eve were at the disposal of several centuries! Besides, God gave them a command: *Be fruitful, and multiply* (**Genesis 1:28**). The Bible does not give the exact number of children of Adam and Eve had but says that Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote: *The number of children of Adam and Eve, according to what the ancient tradition says, was thirty-three sons and twenty-three daughters.*

3. Cain's Wife

If, apart from Adam and Eve, there were no other people,

The wife is related to the husband before marriage, because all (!) people are descendants of Adam and Eve, all descended from the same blood.

The law forbidding close relatives to marry appeared in the time of Moses when God gave the Law to the people of Israel (**Leviticus 18–20**). This happened approximately 2500 years from the creation of Adam and Eve. Until that time, people had been marrying their close relatives.

Notice that Abraham, who lived more than 400 years before Moses, married his paternal sister: **Genesis 20:11–13** — *And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.*

And when Abraham had a son, Isaac, he sent his servant to his relatives to take a wife for his son from among them:



Genesis 24:2–4 — *And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.* Reading further, we discover that Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, was the granddaughter of Nahor, who was the brother of Abraham (**Genesis 24:15** — *And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.*)

And the son of Isaac, Jacob, married Leah and Rachel, who were his cousins (the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's sibling, Jacob's mother). We read about it in **Genesis 28:1–2**: *And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.*

2. Genetic deformities

Today, under existing laws, brothers and sisters (as well as brothers and sisters from one parent) cannot marry each other. And if they marry, then they will not have healthy offspring.

It is true that children from a marriage between a brother and a sister are at risk of deviations from the norm. By the way, the closer the relationship of spouses, the higher the risk of manifestations of genetic abnormalities in offspring. This is easy to understand for an ordinary person, without going into detailed explanations. Everyone gets a set of genes from their parents. Unfortunately, genes today contain a lot of mistakes (due to sin and a curse), and these mistakes manifest themselves in very different ways. For example, one person's ears either bulge out or are asymmetrically arranged, and therefore they have to grow hair out and cover their ears with it. For another person, their nose is not quite in the middle of the face. For the third, their eyes are located asymmetrically. We just stopped noticing it.

has manifested itself in all sorts of distortions of the genetic material of all living things. Therefore, God gave people the law through Moses, prohibiting marriage between close relatives.

But Cain belonged to the first generation of children born on earth. He, like his brothers and sisters, received a virtually immaculate set of genes from Adam and Eve, because the consequences of the impact of sin on the human body were then still minimal. In such a situation, a brother and sister could marry without fear for their posterity.

By the time of Moses (about 2500 later), the degenerative errors in the human gene pool accumulated on such a scale that it was necessary for God to introduce laws prohibiting marriage between brothers and sisters (and other close relatives), because otherwise humanity would have completely degenerated. Among other things, we must not forget that in the times of Moses many people lived on earth and the need for marriage between brothers and sisters completely disappeared.

3. Cain and the land of Nod

Some claim that the verses in **Genesis 4:16–17** mean that Cain went to the land of Nod and there he found a wife. Because of this, they come to believe that there was another race of people on earth that was not descended from Adam and Eve and to which Cain's wife belonged. *And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.*

However, a careful reading of this passage shows that Cain did not find his wife in the land of Nod, but he knew (!) his wife in the land of Nod, after which they had a son, Enoch. Many scholars believe that Cain was already married by the time Abel was killed, otherwise the Bible would say something about Cain's marriage.

4. Who was Cain afraid of?

Genesis 4:14 — *Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

Some, based on this verse, argue that there were many people on earth who were not descendants of Adam and Eve, otherwise Cain would not have had to fear people wanting to kill him because he killed Abel. Who was Cain afraid of?

First, the reason anyone would want to take revenge on Cain for killing Abel was their close relationship! Abel's close relatives were automatically close relatives of Cain, since Cain and Abel were siblings.

Second, Cain and Abel were born long before the death of Abel. In **Genesis 4:3** it says: *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.* Notice the words «in process of time». We know that Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old (**Genesis 5:3**), and Eve saw in him a substitute for the deceased Abel (**Genesis 4:25**). Therefore, the period from the birth of Cain to the death of Abel can be about 100 years, which is enough for the other children of Adam and Eve not only to marry, but also give birth to children and grandchildren. By the time Abel was murdered, the number of descendants of Adam and Eve could have been significant, including several generations.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is the Word of God — the Word of the Creator, Who was present during all historical events. This is the Word of Him Who knows everything, Who is a witness of the past, present, and future, and Who can be relied upon.

And if we begin to treat the Book of Genesis as an infallible source of information about the history of the creation of the world and man, then without the help of the Holy Scriptures some events seem to us incomprehensible and mysterious.

<http://cogmtl.net/q.htm>

Christianity is the official Religion in the Fifteen Countries

In 1802, American President Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to the Connecticut Baptist Association, used the phrase for the first time: «Separation of church and state». However, it is interesting to note that Jefferson, in this message, wanted to say: «Keep the state out of the church's business, not to keep the church out of the state's business». Hot debates have been going on around this topic since then. Can Christianity be the state religion or should the church be separated from the state? I would like to show fifteen countries where Christianity is the state religion. Judge for yourself if it is good or bad...

1. Armenia

Armenia became the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion. This happened in the year of 301, which is much earlier than in Georgia, Byzantium and even in the Roman Empire. According to the legend, Christianity was brought to Armenia by two apostles of Christ Thaddeus and Bartholomew in the forties of our era. Due to the fact that this church was founded by the apostles, it was named the Armenian Apostolic Church. According to official data, about ninety three percent of the population consider themselves to be adherents of the apostolic church today.

2. Argentina

Ninety percent of people profess Christianity in Argentina; seventy percent of whom belong to the Catholic Church, which has a special state status. It is interesting to note that in recent times there has been a decline in Catholicism and the growth of evangelical churches in the country. According to recent surveys, more than twenty four percent people from Argentina attend church weekly. This is a very high figure for Catholics. For example, eighty eight percent of people confess Catholicism in Catholic Poland, but only four percent go to church regularly. On March 13, 2013, the Argentinean Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Cardinal of Buenos Aires, was elected as a Pope, after which he took the name Francis. It was the first Pope in history, who was born in America.

3. Georgia

Eighty eight percent of the population in Georgia are Christians; eighty three of whom belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church. The ninth article of the Georgian constitution says: «The state recognizes the exclusive role of the Georgian Orthodox Church, but at the same time proclaims full freedom of religion». In Georgia, according to the old tradition, an amnesty for prisoners takes place on major Christian holidays. It is interesting to note that Georgia is the second country in the world after Armenia, which in the year of 326 adopted Christianity as the state religion.

4. Costa Rica

Eighty three percent of the population is Christians in Costa Rica; fifty seven percent of whom profess Catholicism. Costa Rica is the only country in America, except Argentina, where the Catholic Church has preferred status, where Catholicism is the state religion. It is interesting to note that today in Costa Rica, as well as throughout Latin America, there is a rapid growth of evangelical

7. Denmark

Seventy five percent of the Danish people belong to the state Church of the Evangelical-Lutheran trend. Despite the fact that such a high percentage belongs to the official church, only ten percent regularly attend the Sunday service. Unfortunately, people are not very religious in Denmark. According to a 2005 survey, this country is in third place in the number of atheists and agnostics in the world.



churches and the decline of Catholicism. Today, more than twenty five percent of Costa Ricans belong to evangelical churches.

5. Tuvalu

Tuvalu is a small Pacific state located in Polynesia. Christianity in Tuvalu was brought in a very unusual way in 1861. The missionary Elekana sailed on a boat to Samoa to preach to the local aborigines, but fell into a violent storm. He was carried by the ocean for eight weeks until the boat was thrown onto the island of Tuvalu. Elekana decided to preach to the local population after getting to the shore. Literally almost the entire island became Christians in fifteen years. Today, Ninety seven percent of the country's population belongs to the state Congregational Church, which is called the Church of Tuvalu.

6. Tonga

Tonga is a small Pacific state in Polynesia. Eighty one percent of Christians live there; sixty five percent of whom belong to the Free Wesleyan Church, which has the status of a state. This is the only country in the world where the branch of Methodism is the state religion. In the country all shops and offices are closed on Sunday and any work is prohibited.

9. Greece

Ninety five percent of the population belongs to the state Greek Orthodox Church in Greece. Under the constitution, proselytism was considered a crime against the Orthodox Church until 1953. It is worth noting that to this day religion in Greece is indicated in the passport. According to Eurostat data in 2010, twenty percent of Orthodox Greeks answered that they do not believe in the

existence of God... some kind of Orthodox atheism... Also, despite the fact that ninety five percent of the population officially belongs to the church, less than three percent attend church regularly.

10. Zambia

Zambia is the only country on the African continent where Christianity is the state religion. It is interesting to note that in the country ninety five percent of people professes Christianity; seventy five percent of whom are Protestants.

11. Iceland

Sixty seven percent of the population belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iceland. According to the constitution, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is supported and sponsored by the state. Recent surveys show that forty percent of Icelanders do not consider themselves religious and do not go to church at all.

12. Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein is the only country in Northern Europe where Catholicism is the state religion. Seventy six percent consider themselves as Catholic out of the eighty five percent who profess Christianity.

13. Malta

Ninety one percent of people profess Christianity; eighty five percent of whom is Roman Catholic.

Christianity in Malta was brought about in the 60th year of our era by the apostle Paul. In the Acts of the Apostles, the story is described as the ship on which Paul sailed to Rome fell into a violent storm and was shipwrecked near the island of Melit. Christian scholars believe that Melit is a modern Malta. Today the place where the ship of Dioscura was wrecked is called St. Paul's Bay. It is interesting to note that many catacombs have survived in Malta since the persecutions of the first Christians.

14. Monaco

The Principality of Monaco is one of the few European countries where there is an official religion. Article 9 of the country's Constitution proclaims the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church to be the state. At the same time, the constitution also proclaims the freedom of worship and prohibits forcing anyone to participate in religious ceremonies. In 1960, missionary radio was opened on the basis of the Evangelical Church in Monaco. The goal was to broadcast Christian programs behind the Iron Curtain in the Soviet Union. The main preacher of this radio was the famous Jarl Paistie, who moved to live in Monaco specifically for this purpose.

15. The Vatican

The Vatican was founded in 1292 with the filing of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Today the population of this mini-country is approximately thousand people. This is the only country in the world where hundred percent of the population belongs to the state church, and the Vatican is the only state in the world with zero fertility...

www.romansavochka.com

PROVERBS

THE HOUSE-BUILDING

One day a woman came to the priest with a complaint about her husband:

«We have a big family, but my husband does not raise children, brings little money, lies on the sofa every day and does nothing. I do not know what to do».

The priest told her:

«You must live with your husband based on the house-building. If you do this, after a while you will lie on the sofa, and he will run around you».

«And how can this be done?» the woman asked.

«Come home and tell your husband that you have built wrong relationships with him and from this day on you will obey him. Do nothing without his blessing».

The woman comes home; the husband is lying on the sofa. She approaches him and says:

«I lived the wrong way with you. The priest taught me, he said that we must live according to the house-building. Now, I will not do anything without your blessing and your orders».

Husband sat on the couch.

«Well, finally a normal priest appeared here», the husband said.

Wife asks:

«Husband, will you bless me to go to the store?»

«Well, go», said the alerted husband.

«How much money will you bless me to spend?»

«Oh, that's it!» the husband said in a satisfied voice and reached into his pocket.



He counted out some money and gave it to her. The woman went to the store and bought what was possible to buy with this money. She called the husband to the table. He approached, looked, but there was nothing to eat at all.

«What are you stupid? How can you feed your family with this?»

«How much my husband blessed me to spend, for that much I bought», answered the wife.

«Stupid!» said the husband, took the bag and went to the store himself.

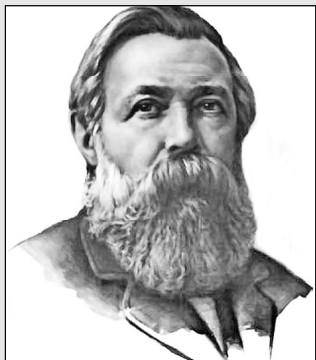
He returned home pensive. He tells his wife:

«How everything has risen in price...»

By the end of the week he began to look for a second job. And the wife is sitting on the couch and waiting for the instructions of her husband, as the priest had said.

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CHRISTIAN NEWS

QUOTES FROM
FAMOUS PEOPLE
ABOUT GOD
AND THE BIBLE

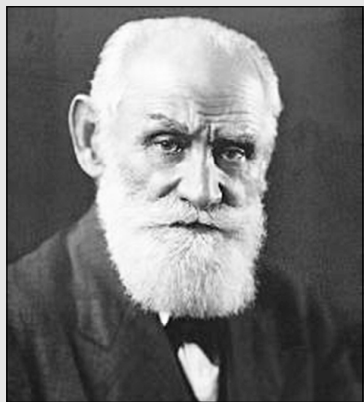
Frederick ENGELS

In 1842, he wrote in the article «Schelling, Philosopher In Christ»: «All enemies of God are coming together and attacking the believers with all possible weapons; the indifferent ones who indulge in the lust of this world and to whom the word of the cross was too boring, pricked by conscience, are uniting with the atheist worldly wise and by their doctrine are trying to lull the worm within to sleep; the latter, for their part, deny with barefaced impudence everything that cannot be seen with the eyes, God and all life after death, and so, of course, it follows that for them this world is supreme, this world with its enjoyments of the flesh, with feasting, boozing and whoring. It is no longer an indifference and coldness in respect of the Lord, nay, it is open, declared hostility, and instead of all the sects and parties we now have only two: Christians and Anti-Christians. But he who has eyes to see, let him see and not blind them; for now is not the time to sleep and resort to subterfuges; where the signs of the times speak so clearly, there is need to pay heed to them and to search in the words of the prophecy, which has not been given us for nothing. We see the false prophets in our midst,

All shame and respect and reverence have vanished out of them and the abominable mockeries of a Voltaire are child's play compared with the horrible earnestness and the deliberate blasphemy of these seducers. They... want to sneak in everywhere, they preach their satanic doctrines in the market-places and carry the devil's standard from city to city, enticing the poor youths after them, to cast them into the deepest abyss of hell and death. Temptation abounds as never before, and it cannot be without special purpose that the Lord permits it.

Nay, we must open our eyes and look about us; the times are important and it is to meet to watch and pray, so that we enter not into temptation and the Lord who will come like a thief in the night may not find us sleeping...»

* * *



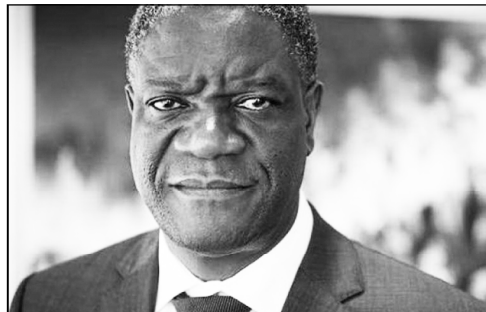
Ivan Petrovich PAVLOV

Soviet scientist, academician, who created the teachings and taught about the higher nervous system and its activities, remained a strong believer in God until death, attended church and supported the church financially.

One of the students and followers of Pavlov writes: «I was fortunate enough to visit them (Pavlov family) several times. Every time Serafima Vasilievna (Pavlov's wife) greeted me with these words: «Mr. Communist, isn't it time you think about the salvation of your soul?»

Congolese gynecologist, Denis Mukwege, is fighting for the rights of women; he dedicated his career to serve rape victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo and was awarded the Nobel World Peace Prize 2018.

Over the past 20 years, Mukwege has helped ten thousands of patients in the Panzi hospital in Bukavu, many of whom were raped by militants as a weapon of war in the conflict, were traumatized and mocked.

Nobel Peace Prize
Awarded
To a Christian Doctor

«Not only do I give treatment, but also fight for women's rights, for them to become independent, and provide them with psychological assistance. All of this is part of the healing process, a goal to help women recover and rebuild their esteem».

Mukwege is the son of a Pentecostal minister. He decided to go into a medical field after traveling with his father, during which they prayed for the sick. The Panzi Hospital, founded by Mukwege in 1999, is being run by the Congolese Pentecostal movement CEPAC and has been continuously supported by the Swedish Pentecostal movement.

«If we, Christians, do not manifest our faith in matters of society, then we will not be able to fulfill the mission entrusted to us by Christ», said Mukwege last year in an opening speech during the congress of the World Lutheran Federation.

In addition, the 63-year-old doctor advocates a Christian understanding of the equal rights of men and women before God. He wears an engraved badge which says: «Stop trampling our greatest jewels in the mud, our women and girls of the Democratic Republic of the Congo».

«We are the heirs of Martin Luther through the Word of God, and we can drive away the spirits of fornication who have mastered the world, and then women who are victims of male barbarity will know the Kingdom of God».

Christian groups joined the Mukwege protest march against sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where violence has reigned for decades.

«The ministry of Dr. Mukwege with the victims of violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo inspires me and many of us», said Rick Santos, President and CEO of the Christian organization IMA World Health. «It is a great honor for us to call him and Panzi Hospital as our partners in the fight against this blemish and where it spreads».

Denis was the only doctor in that region in his field, and then became, perhaps, the world's leading expert in relief and rehabilitation. The hospital also offers patients therapy, legal assistance, literature and recovery assistance in society.

Mukwege called fellow Christians to think about «trusting the gospel in the 21st century to use the grace that we received, making the church the light that shines in this world of darkness thanks to our struggle for justice, truth, law, freedom and dignity of men and women».

A Christian Pilot saved
140 people from death by
listening to the voice of God

A Christian airline pilot says the Holy Spirit moved him to hurry up the departure of his Batik Air flight from Palu carrying 140 passengers, perhaps saving many lives as the disaster unfolded around them, according to the website God Reports.

Captain Icoze Mafella spoke about the experience at a Jakarta last year.

Mafella, a devout Christian, said he felt uneasy and he began to sing worship songs in the cockpit on the inbound flight from Ujung Pandang to Palu.

«Usually I only hummed, but that day I wanted to praise the Lord as best I could», he recalled.

«I think you should make a CD of worship songs», his Muslim co-pilot told him, jokingly.

Mafella told the congregation that when they were about to land at the Palu Airport, the wind was unusually strong and he «heard a voice in his heart» directing him to circle again before landing.

Mafella said he reminded himself to be extra careful with the landing and recited the 23rd Psalm.



After the plane landed, Mafella said the Holy Spirit prompted him once more that he needed to hurry while on the ground. He instructed the airplane's crew to just take a short break before the plane took off for Ujung Pandang with their final destination being Jakarta.

«I didn't even leave the cockpit and requested permission from the control tower to depart three minutes ahead of schedule», he recalled.

Receiving the OK from Air Controller Anthonius Agung, the captain, and his crew prepared for departure. He said he felt such an urgency that he broke with standard flight procedures and took over some of his co-pilot's duties in order to speed up their leave time.

The time for their departure came and the Mafella's plane shot down the runway.

«I don't know why but my hand kept pushing the lever causing the plane to speed up as it took off», he said.

As the plane sped down the runway, the massive earthquake began to strike Palu. Both pilots felt the plane shift from the left to the right, according to God Reports.

«If I had taken off three minutes later, I would not have been able to save the 140 passengers, because the asphalt on the landing strip was moving up and down like a curtain blowing in the wind», he said.

Mafella said he attempted to talk to the control tower, but there was no response on the radio.

After the plane landed in Ujung Pandang, he found out about the earthquake and tsunami in Palu. He later learned that Agung, the air traffic controller, made sure their plane had taken off safely before he jumped from the control tower as it was being brought down by the quake. Agung later died of his injuries.

«In this difficult time, during the split seconds of decisions, he waited for me until I was safe before he jumped», Mafella said. «That's why I call him my guardian angel».

The captain also reminded the church members that it's important we hear the voice of God.

«And whatever happens we must be calm, not in a panic so that we can clearly hear the voice of God coming to us by the Holy Spirit», he said.

A devout Christian, a mother of six children and a dishwasher fired by Conrad Miami Hotel (Florida) for refusing to work on Sundays, was awarded \$21 million for damages awarded by a federal jury after she sued her religious rights.

«I love God. I can't work on Sundays, because on this day I honor God», said 60-year-old, immigrant from Haiti, Marie Jean Pierre in an interview with NBC 6 South Florida news.

Dishwasher awarded
\$21 million
for refusing to work
on Sundays

According to the newspaper *The Miami Herald*, the court found out that the hotel fired Pierre because the employee could not work on Sundays, although the employer knew that she was attending Soldiers of Christ Church.

Marie Jean Pierre worked at the hotel from 2006 to 2016, and in 2015 her boss, kitchen manager George Colon, decided that she would have to work on Sundays. Her co-workers traded shifts with Pierre to help her fulfill her spiritual duties, but Colon demanded that she show up for her assigned shift, and when she refused she was fired on March 31, 2016. The hotel claims that she was dismissed for misconduct, negligence and unexcused absences.

Marie Jean Pierre filed a lawsuit against the hotel in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in May 2017.



In retaliation, the respondent took action: among other things, he turned employees against Pierre, reprimanded her for her religious beliefs, and dismissed her.

Pierre's lawyer, Marc Brumer, reported that the hotel management claimed in court that it was unaware that Pierre was a missionary and that she always wanted Sundays off.

Pierre reported that in 2009, the hotel had scheduled her to work on Sundays and she informed them that if they did she would have to resign. To persuade her not to leave, however, the hotel accommodated her request until 2015.

After hearing the case, a federal jury in Miami issued a verdict that the hotel must pay Pierre \$36,000 for lost wages, \$500,000 for moral damage and \$21 million for punitive damages.

Although the federal court has a cap on the punitive damages, according to Brumer, Pierre will receive at least \$500,000.

The Hilton hotel spokeswoman told NBC that the organization was disappointed with the jury's verdict and did not believe that it was supported by the facts of the court case and the law. «We plan to appeal and show that the Conrad Miami was and remains a welcoming place for all guests and employees».

We were asked an interesting question. It's a pity that they didn't specify what kind of curse they are talking about: a clan or curse by an evil person. Therefore, we have to guess what exactly was meant by this word.

Before answering the question, we offer you a brief excursion into the theme of God's curse.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF BIBLICAL BLESSING AND CURSE

We read in the Bible: Exodus 20:1-6 — And God spake all these words, saying, I am the

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From these passages we can see the following:

• The Lord sends a curse on those who hate Him, that is, on those who do not love God and do not obey His commandments.

• This curse extends to the third and fourth generation.

• The Lord blesses those who love Him, that is, those who love

children raised in an atmosphere of godlessness often grow up as atheists and give their atheism belief to their children. This is an illustration of the ancient Russian proverb *Apple does not fall far from the apple tree*. So it turns out that God's curse extends to the third and fourth generation.

TEMPTATION OR CURSE?



LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or 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: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Also in Exodus 34:6-7: And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

God and live according to His commandments.

• This blessing extends to thousands of generations.

The principle of God's blessing and cursing, which will be clarified below.

Regarding curse

There is such a place in the Bible, Ezekiel 18:20 — The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

At a first glance it seems that there is a contradiction between what was written in Exodus and the Book of Ezekiel. Not really. The Lord never undeservedly punishes anyone and does not curse. Each person is responsible only for his or her sins before the Lord. As for the text of Exodus 20:1-6, this is how it should be interpreted.

The curse from generation to generation is distributed in the family in such a way that most often children follow the same footsteps of their parents. If parents were atheists, then

Regarding blessing

The blessing from generation to generation is spread in a similar way. If parents love God and raise children in the atmosphere of God's love and worship, then the child has more chances to grow up as a God-fearing person and pass on his fear of God and worship to his children and grandchildren. Thus, generation after generation is under God's blessing.

You may ask: And what about those who grew up in a family of atheists, but they themselves came to God? Or what will happen to those who, having been raised in God-fearing homes, themselves departed from God and indulged in a lustful life? Will there be a family curse at first, and blessings after?

This is how the Lord God Himself answers this question: Ezekiel 18:14-21 — Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's

wife, Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Therefore, each person is responsible for their sins only. If someone is cursed by God, then he bears this curse primarily for his or her own sins! Similarly, a person gains grace and blessing not by inheritance, but as a reward for close relationship with God, for the love of the Lord and for the faith and trust in Him and His Word.

II. ANSWER TO A QUESTION

Keeping what was said above in mind, let us count the signs by which you can distinguish whether you are under a curse or going through a temptation.

1. If you have heard of Christ and of His sacrifice, but did not open your heart to the Savior, then you are under a curse and the problems you face are most likely part of the curse.

2. If you, considering yourself a Christian, continue to live in sin, then you are, firstly, under a curse (Deuteronomy 27:15-26), and secondly, you are reaping the fruits as the consequences of your sin. As the saying goes, what goes around, comes around. In some way this too is a curse, because a person cannot escape the consequences of his or her sin.

3. If you love the Lord and gave your heart to Christ and dedicate your life to Him, then you are not under a curse. The Lord Jesus carried your curses onto Himself: Galatians 3:13-14 — Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The problems that you encounter in your Christian life are likely the testing of your faith, That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ... (1 Peter 1:7).

We hope our answer will help you make the right decision in the circumstances in which you are now.

<http://cogmtl.net/q.htm>

Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

The publication office requests that you enclose your postal address with your material (testimonies, sermons, articles, etc.) for publication in «Prisoner». If you enclose photos with your material, we will be glad to publish them.

And for those of you just on the way to God, it's time to turn to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a short prayer:

«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!»



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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***** ATTENTION! *****

Dear readers, today the newspaper «Prisoner» has the status of the two languages: Russian and English. «Prisoner» is printed in the Ukraine and in America. However, the newspaper 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!

Our main focus is ministering to inmates in jails and prisons.

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That you may say to the prisoners, «Go forth», To those who are in darkness, «Show yourselves» (Is. 49:9).

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