



# Seek The Old Paths

*“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”*  
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 27, No. 11

November 2016

## TO WHOM ARE WE TO PRAY? #2

*Jon Gary Williams*

***The assigned role of Jesus is that of being the avenue of prayer to the Father, not the recipient of prayer.***

In our previous article (Oct/16) we presented what the Scriptures clearly reveal concerning to whom prayers are to be offered — it is only to our heavenly Father. To review:

First, in the sermon on the mount, two times Jesus taught that we are to pray to the Father. *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven...”* (Matt. 6:9; cf. 7:7,11). On another occasion when His disciples specifically asked to be taught how to pray, Jesus told them, *“...When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven...”* (Luke 11:2).

Second, more than two dozen times the Scriptures show it was God the Father to whom prayers were addressed. As examples, *“...They they lifted up their voice to God...”* (Acts 4:24); *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father...”* (Eph. 5:20). However, in sharp contrast, not one time is such a statement found regarding praying to Jesus. If early Christians prayed to Jesus, why is the New Testament void of any clear statements that show this?

Third, the assigned role of Jesus is that of being the avenue of prayer to the Father, not the recipient of prayer. Jesus plainly taught that prayers to the Father were to be offered through Him, i.e., in His name, *“...Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name...”* (John 15:16; cf. John 14:13; 16:23, 26). The fact is,

early Christians prayed through Jesus, never to Jesus (Rom. 1:8; 7:25).

Now, we turn attention to:

### THE DEFENSE OF “PRAYING TO JESUS” EXAMINED

The proper way to determine what the Bible teaches on any subject is to examine all passages that speak directly to that subject before drawing a conclusion — in this instance passages that speak directly to whom prayers are to be offered. This is the approach used in the previous article as summarized above.

Sadly, however, those who promote praying to Jesus have departed from this norm. Rather than researching passages on prayer and specifically to whom prayer is to be offered, they begin by presuming Jesus can be prayed to. Then, with *subjective reasoning* and *misapplied passages* they attempt to justify this view. Following are examples of such attempts and a refutation of them.

### USING SUBJECTIVE REASONING

**“Some religious leaders of the past believed in praying to Jesus.”**

Though this statement is true, there are countless others who did not believe it. Past religious leaders believed any number of false ideas, a fact which is also true of religious

leaders today. This is an extremely weak attempt at supporting the idea of praying to Jesus.

**“If it is wrong to pray to Jesus then some songs in our song books cannot be used.”**

Indeed, some songs convey an unscriptural concept of prayer. For example, “Just A Little Talk With Jesus” and “I Must Tell Jesus.” However, though some songs are seen to be inappropriate is hardly a way to find authority for praying to Jesus. Most hymn books have songs which are obviously unscriptural (e.g., “Angels Rock Me To Sleep”; “There’s A Church In The Valley”; “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”). Just because a song appears in a hymn book does not sanction its use.

**“Jesus is Deity, He created us, He gave His life for us, He is our Redeemer and King. Surely we can pray to Him.”**

Since Jesus is all this, some are aghast that He would not be prayed to. However, by this reasoning the Holy Spirit can also be prayed to. Remember that the Holy Spirit is also Deity (Acts 5:3,4), He created us (Job 33:4), He teaches and guides us (John 14:26; 16:13), He sanctifies us (Rom. 15:16), and in Him we walk (Gal.

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**To Whom Are We To Pray?...**



Editorial...

## THE LAND DEFILED #1

Garland M. Robinson

The eternal Word of God is rich beyond man's comprehension. As a loving caring father, the God of heaven and earth has given humanity instruction to keep him from the evil and direct him to the good. Because of their immaturity, children do not understand the dangers and perils surrounding them. It takes wise parents to protect and instruct their children of these dangers so they may grow into responsible wise adults themselves.

The very root of the world's problems, more times than not, lies at the door step of the home. With but few exceptions the vast majority of fathers and mothers are not raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (cf. Eph. 6:1-4). There have been and there will be children who are stubborn and rebellious who refuse to receive proper instruction in the home. But this is the exception rather than the rule. The news reports of every single day tell us of horrific atrocities committed around the world by wicked men and women. The perpetrators of these events have not been taught about decency and uprightness or if they have, they've refused to heed it. No wonder we read in 1 John 5:19, "the whole world lieth in wickedness."

The book of Exodus tells of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Arriving at Sinai, Moses ascended the mountain and received the 10 commandments written with the finger of God on two tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18). Afterwards, the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were given to provide the people with more specific details of the law.

In chapter 18 of Leviticus, God commands them to not do as the Egyptians (from whose land they had come), nor were they to do as the Canaanites (into whose land God would lead them). Instead, "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I [am] the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>Ye shall there-

fore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I [am] the LORD" (Lev. 18:4-5).

The nations of the Canaanites were committing wickedness of which the Israelites were forbidden. In Leviticus 18:6-23, God lays out the nations' exceedingly gross and wicked abominations. They were prohibited from approaching any near kin — the point being to uncover or look upon their nakedness in some lewd or disgraceful sense. This forbid any shameful, indecent or improper behavior. The sins particularly mentioned were regarding lustful, sensual, lascivious actions with fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, brothers in law and sisters in law, children and grandchildren, aunts and uncles, the spouse of neighbors, men with men, women with women, and men and women with animals. Doesn't this sound exactly like what is going on in today's world?

Pay special attention to Leviticus 18:22-30 in light of conditions in America and the world today: <sup>22</sup>"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it [is] abomination. <sup>23</sup>Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it [is] confusion. <sup>24</sup>Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: <sup>25</sup>And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. <sup>26</sup>Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit [any] of these abominations; [neither] any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: <sup>27</sup>(For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which [were] before you, and the land is defiled;) <sup>28</sup>That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that [were] before you. <sup>29</sup>For whoso-

ever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit [them] shall be cut off from among their people. <sup>30</sup>Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that [ye] commit not [any one] of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I [am] the LORD your God."

These verses are from the Old Testament which has been taken away and replaced by Christ's New Testament (Gal. 3:24-25; Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9); but, they teach a moral principle that is just as true and valid today as it was then. Remember, Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The things written aforetime are the things written in the Old Testament.

However, the New Testament, which governs the whole world since 33 A.D., condemns these very same sins. <sup>9</sup>"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, <sup>10</sup>Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). <sup>24</sup>"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: <sup>25</sup>Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. <sup>26</sup>For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: <sup>27</sup>And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet" (Rom. 1:24-27)

The practice of "political correctness" provides for the protection and promotion of the vile and despicable sin of **homosexuality**, otherwise known as **same sex marriage**. Why is it that we never hear of sodomy today? In times past, news broadcasts would report of someone being sodomized. But that is now a practice of

the distant past. Such acts are now protected by law. Who would have believed it even ten years ago?

God describes the consequences of these degenerate acts by saying that those who do them have *defiled themselves* (Lev. 18:20,23,24,30). By these acts “*the nations are defiled*” (Lev. 18:24), and “*the land is defiled*” (Lev. 18:25,27).

The United States of America is in the midst of a terrible crisis, from national debt to personal debt, from moral decline to moral disaster! We’re in a mess and teetering on the brink of disaster. What does the future hold? The outcome of every political election is of enormous magnitude, more so than at any other time in our lives. Our very survival as a nation and as citizens of this country is at stake. Our freedom to work and worship and teach and preach the Gospel in an unhindered way is at stake. The seeds of spiritual and moral digression and apostasy have been (and are being) sown for many years.

*Liberalism* and *Progressivism* are championing the way. The moral fabric of our land, the whole world, is collapsing, falling prey to their own greed and selfishness and pleasure. Who’s at fault? There’s plenty of blame to go around. Is it the President, the Democrats, the Republicans? YES! Every side says they have the answer but they don’t even know the questions, little own the solution. *Conservatism* is the way — at least pointing in the right direction. It contends toward moral decency and uprightness — Biblical principles. What do you support?

What’s the problem? How did we get to the mess we’re in? It’s a simple answer, yet a profound answer: **SIN!** People living for the moment — living in trespasses and sins (cf. Eph. 2:1) — living to satisfy every sensual pleasure and desire of the heart!

Solomon gives some insight into the situation. He is one who could say, “I’ve been there and done that.” Notice what he wrote in Ecclesiastes 2:1-11:

- v.1, I said in mine heart...I will prove thee with mirth, I will enjoy pleasure: but he found it was folly and vanity.  
v.3, I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine — THAT DID NOT WORK  
v.4, I made me great works; I

- buildest me houses; I planted me vineyards:  
v.5, I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:  
v.6, I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:  
v.7, I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:  
v.8, I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.  
v.9, So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.  
v.10, And WHATSOEVER MINE EYES DESIRED I KEPT NOT FROM THEM, I WITHHELD NOT MY HEART FROM ANY JOY; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour:  
v.11, Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Second Timothy 3:4 tells us the world is filled with those who are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” Pleasure speaks of: worldly, sensual, carnal, lewd, lascivious, licentious, lustful, wanton, sinful, immoral, earthly behavior. This kind of pleasure is contrary to God’s will because it is in violation of it. It’s the gratification of one’s own lust and passion. It’s not speaking of clean, wholesome pleasure such as serving God or enjoying quality time with your family. It’s speaking of everything that is selfish, self-centered and materialistic.

We cannot help but think on governor FELIX, before whom the apostle Paul stood and “*reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.*” For a moment at least, Felix “*trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*”

(Acts 24:25). Why did he resist such sobering words? Why was he scared to death but refuse to heed? There’s no evidence he ever found that convenient season. Don’t you know he has wished millions and billions of times since that day that he would have listened, repented and obeyed the Gospel? Was his quest and indulgence of pleasure worth the price of his soul? The Lord answers that question. “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Matt. 16:26)? The rich man lifted up his eyes in “*torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom...*”<sup>24</sup>cried and said, *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*<sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, *Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*” (Luke 16:23-25).

What about the RICH YOUNG RULER who stood before Jesus and said, “*Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” The Lord told him to keep the commandments, to which he replied that he had kept them and asked what else he needed to do.<sup>21</sup>“*Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go [and] sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come [and] follow me.*”<sup>22</sup>But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matt. 19:16-22). Don’t you think he regretted walking away? What would he say if you asked him if he would like another chance? It’s too late now!

What about KING AGRIPPA who told Paul, “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*” (Acts 26:28)? He was so close to obeying the Gospel, but did not. What would he give to have another chance? Heaven knows. We know.

James 5:1-6 speaks of those who have sought their own pleasure instead of seeking to please God. Described here are those who look to themselves for the “here and now” and are not concerned with the “there and then.”<sup>24</sup>“*Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*”<sup>25</sup>“*Your gold and silver is cankered; and*

the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have **lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton**; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.”

Moses is a worthy example of one who made a decision not to continue with the Egyptians, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the **pleasures of sin** for a season” (Heb. 11:25). Sin, indeed, is filled with pleasure. It pretends to bring satisfaction and enjoyment. But, it’s only for “a season” (short-lived) and the price is too high. It costs one the eternal destruction of their soul in a devil’s hell (cf. Matt. 5:27-32; 25:41-46). The world needs multitudes more who would choose to live for God instead of themselves. Such a sacrificial life will bring persecution and suffering “now” (2 Tim.

3:12) but will be rewarded with eternal bliss in heaven in the life to come.

Those who live in pleasure are dead in sin. To be dead in sin is to be lost in sin. To be lost in sin, is to lose your soul (Mark 8:36-37). When you lose your soul, you’ve lost it all. Repent, before it’s too late!

AMOS gives some insight on the situation. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). Though this was fulfilled centuries ago, we are even now living in such a time as that spoken of by Amos. There is a great famine of HEARING and HEEDING the word of the Lord today. It was this way in the days of Jeremiah and Isaiah. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love [to have it] so: and what will ye do in the end thereof” (Jer. 5:31). “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this [is] a rebellious people, lying children, children

[that] will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:8-10).

People in general and far too many Christians in particular, are MORE CONCERNED with the economy, their jobs and retirement than they are the RIGHT WAYS of the Lord. The issues of securing our borders, national security and terrorism is of great concern to us all. People are WORRIED and FEARFUL about the future. And, well they should be! But, there’s a higher matter about which we should be more concerned. The salvation of our soul!

What does the Bible say about all this? Is there an absolute answer? YES! Is there hope? YES! “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [is] a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). “By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 11:11).

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## To Whom Are We To Pray?...

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5:16). Also, among those who defend praying to Jesus, there is disagreement on praying to the Holy Spirit, making this argument useless.

### MISAPPLIED PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

#### “Stephen prayed to Jesus (Acts 7:59,60).”

This text is often cited as an example of praying to Jesus. Actually, this is the only possible example of such a prayer, for there are simply no others. To say that Stephen’s words represent a prayer offered to Jesus is an assumption. The following observations should be noted.

First, it was Jesus who initiated contact with Stephen and it was not because Stephen was praying. Stephen was not engaged in prayer — rather, he was preaching. Being viciously berated, Stephen was astonished when Jesus miraculously appeared to him in his immediate presence. Stephen could visibly see

Jesus! He then exclaimed to his persecutors, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” At this, he was taken from the city and stoned. Knowing the end was near, Stephen requested of Jesus that upon his death He would receive him and also that his persecutors not be held accountable.

Second, as Jesus witnessed his brutal death, Stephen was addressing Him face to face. Beholding Jesus in a miraculous vision, Stephen’s words, spoken directly to Jesus’ person should not be misconstrued as prayer. To do so is reading something into the text that isn’t there. It cannot be irrefutably claimed that Stephen’s words constitute prayer. This was a unique occurrence in which Jesus comforted Stephen by making His presence visibly known. To believe this occurrence is an example of prayer that we can emulate today, one would have to see Jesus in a miraculous vision.

Third, notice that Jesus’ miraculous appearance to Stephen is not unlike two other such appearances in which people spoke directly to Him,

neither of which involved prayer: to Saul (Acts 9:3-6), and to Ananias (Acts 9:10-16).

Using Acts 7:59,60 to justify praying to Jesus is at best a contrived argument and, therefore, worthless.

#### “The ‘Lord’ to whom the apostles prayed was Jesus, the One who had chosen them (Acts 1:24).”

Does “Lord” in this text refer to Jesus or is this merely supposition? First, notice that though the word “Lord” often refers to Jesus, more than thirty times it refers to the Father (e.g., Matt. 4:7; 22:44; Luke 1:9,15; 4:12,18; Acts 2:34; 3:22; 4:24,26,29; 5:9; 7:31,37; 8:22,24,26,29; Rom. 12:19; 14:6). It is only opinion that the “Lord” in this text is Jesus, an opinion that runs counter to a host of passages showing prayer being offered only to the Father.

Second, though Jesus is said to have called the apostles, notice that four times He said it was the Father who “gave” them to Him (John 17:6,9,11,12). If God gave them, God selected them — there can be no other conclusion. Also, see the clear testimony regarding the apostle Paul:

Ananias said God chose him (Acts 22:14) and two times Paul himself said he was chosen by God (Gal. 1:15,16; Eph. 1:1). Indeed, it was the Father who chose the apostles and it was the Father to whom the apostles prayed.

**“The ‘Lord’ to whom Paul prayed refers to Jesus (2 Cor. 12:8).”**

This is yet another assumption. The verse reads, *“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”* As with Acts 1:24, it is merely presumed that the term “Lord” refers to Jesus. However, as noted above, “Lord” often applies to the Father, and there is nothing in this passage suggesting that it applies specifically to Jesus.

It is argued that since the Lord’s words (*“My grace is sufficient for thee”* v.9) are followed by Paul’s remark, *“the power of Christ may rest upon me,”* this somehow means that “Lord” refers to Jesus. However, the text does not at all imply this. In view of the fact that multiple passages show prayer being directed to the Father, a more credible meaning of this text is that the “power of Christ” is the means by which Paul had access to the “grace” of God through prayer. It should be remembered that in the New Testament there are at least two dozen passages exalting the marvelous grace of God.

**“To ‘call on the name of Jesus’ means prayer (1 Cor. 1:2).”**

We find here another assumption. This expression does not imply praying to Jesus. At times, it is simply used to identify those who were followers of Jesus (Acts 9:14,21) for it was to Him they belonged. Likewise, the word “name” sometimes refers to authority or approval (Acts 4:18,30; Col. 3:17) and, no doubt, this is the idea conveyed in 1 Corinthians 1:2.

Notice that calling on the name of the Lord is also found in Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, *“whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Are these passages also referring to prayer? Obviously, not, for this would mean lost people can merely pray to be saved. This shows the erroneous use of 1 Corinthians 1:2 to establish the idea of praying to Jesus.

**“1 Thessalonians 3:11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17 are examples of**

**prayers to both God and Jesus.”**

In his first letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul writes: *“Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”* To label this as a prayer is to disregard what the passage actually says. In this verse, Paul was not speaking to the Father or Jesus, rather, he was speaking about them. To whom was he speaking? He was addressing the Christians at Thessalonica. In verses 11-13 he said “you” and “your” which refers to the Thessalonians. How some have failed to understand this is a mystery.

There is nothing difficult about these passages. The apostle is merely expressing his desire that the Father and Son provide a way for him to come and be with them. Brethren have also failed to notice that the context begins with mention made of prayer — a prayer offered to God (v.9).

What about Paul’s similar admonition in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17? Again, he was not speaking to God or Jesus, but to the Thessalonians. The pronouns “your” and “you” confirm this. *“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father... Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”* As with the previous passage, nothing here even remotely speaks to the idea of praying to Jesus.

**“In John 14:14 some translations contain the word ‘me.’ The ESV, for example, reads, ‘If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.’”**

From this, some conclude that praying to Jesus is authorized. It must be pointed out, however, that many translations do not contain the word “me.” Hence, the inclusion of “me” in this passage is not as definite as some assume, which is evidenced by the fact that it is not found in many standard translations (KJV, ASV, NKJV, et al). Notice that putting “me” into this passage causes Jesus to speak absurdly, for it has Him telling His disciples to pray to Him in His own name.

Also, in this verse Jesus repeated what He had just said in the preceding verse, which lacks the word “me” — *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do...”* Why would Jesus have suddenly altered the thought by adding “Me” in His very

next statement? Later in the same discourse, Jesus further clarifies what He is teaching His disciples to do — to pray to the Father in His name (John 15:16; 16:23-29).

Notice carefully what Jesus said in verse 14 — pray “in My name.” The words “in My name” represent His intercessor/advocate role (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). This twisted use of John 14:14 has Jesus interceding/advocating to Himself, which makes no sense. The fact is, He intercedes/advocates to the Father. This should be clear to all. As an example, see 1 John 2:1. It does not read, “And if anyone sins, pray to Jesus.” Rather, it reads, “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

**“‘Maranatha’ in 1 Corinthians 16:22 is a prayer.”**

The Aramaic term *Maranatha* has been interpreted in different ways. Depending on how it is divided, it can mean either: Maran-atha (“our Lord has come”), or Marana-tha (“our Lord, come”). Some adopt the latter, arbitrarily labeling it a prayer. However, since this involves only an opinion, it is futile to use it as an example of a prayer to Jesus.

Regardless of the meaning of the word, it should be clear the apostle was not engaged in prayer. As he was bringing this epistle to a close, Paul used the uplifting, encouraging term “Maranatha,” in sharp contrast to the preceding, unpleasant term “Anathema” (“accursed”), describing those who “love not the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is an extremely weak argument and hardly a case to support the idea of praying to Jesus.

**“In Revelation 5:8,9 prayers were offered to Jesus.”**

It is claimed that the “prayers of the saints” (symbolically, the golden vials {bowls} full of odours {incense}) were ascending to Christ, but this is yet another assumption, for the text simply does not say this. Since, among other things, Jesus said we are to pray to God (Matt. 6:9) and Paul said we are to pray to God (Eph. 5:20), this alone exposes the assumption.

However, the likely meaning of this text is that the exalted “worthy lamb,” as Advocate (1 John 2:1), is the means by which prayers come before God.

Remember that the text cited (Rev. 5:9) goes on to say they sang a song to Jesus, but not that they prayed to Him. Notice also three chapters later, “the prayers of all saints” are said to “ascend up before God” (Rev. 8:3,4).

Just here, a word of caution. Be aware when someone appeals to the highly symbolic book of Revelation to promote a teaching. This practice is seen all too often among sectarian groups. Using Revelation in this way is misleading and dangerous. If this text provides authority for praying to Jesus, it is also authority to praise Jesus with harps — a slippery slope indeed. Extreme care must be taken to avoid putting something into a passage which is not there.

**OF WHAT VALUE ARE THE ABOVE PASSAGES IN SUPPORT OF PRAYING TO JESUS?**

Notice that arguments drawn from these passages are all based on assumption and, therefore, are inconclusive in supporting the idea of praying to Jesus. This being the case, how can it be inferred that combining inconclusive passages will somehow conclusively establish this teaching? This is literally going step by step with uncertainty and winding up at a place of certainty. Such reasoning contradicts logic and common sense. Merely stringing together several passages from which assumptions are drawn in no way confirms this view.

**AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION**

In discussions with preachers who support praying to Jesus, I have discovered most fail to define exactly

what they mean. Their common thesis is that prayers can be offered to Jesus, but exactly how this is done is unclear and confusing.

I have asked these brethren if they or any brethren where they preach, ever offer public prayers solely to Jesus apart from the Father. Most of them avoided answering, because such prayers are not heard in their assemblies. To advocate praying to Jesus, yet failing to offer public prayers to Him, is inconsistent.

So, what kind of praying to Jesus do they practice? I asked for an illustration of how they pray to Jesus. Most declined. One said, “I often say, Lord, thank You for sacrificing Your life on my behalf.” So, his praying to Jesus consisted of a simple, private “thank you, Jesus,” but, this is not what brethren generally envision when hearing about praying to Jesus. Instead, they have in mind a public prayer being offered only to Jesus, apart from the Father. Yet, this is not the kind of prayer most brethren who promote praying to Jesus have in mind. In fact, truth, be known, they would not necessarily approve of such public prayers offered to Jesus. Confusing, isn't it.

So, here is the irony. Those who adamantly insist that public prayers be offered to Jesus, defend this practice by relying on the works of brethren who may not actually approve of such public prayers. The problem is, leading promoters of praying to Jesus fail to define the kind of praying they promote — a somewhat private type of praying. Instead, they paint the matter with a broad brush and, unfortunately (and maybe unknowingly) give support to those who insist that public prayers should be

offered to Jesus. This is where the problem lies and brethren need to be forewarned.

**A CLOSING THOUGHT**

Those who advocate praying to Jesus should be aware that the offering of such prayers in public worship will offend the conscience of many and create divisiveness. This alone should cause brethren to prayerfully rethink their position.

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Beginning Balance.....	\$7,898.48
Contributions .....	\$2,615.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$1,779.96
Supplies .....	\$43.06
Ending Balance.....	\$8,690.46

**WHAT ABOUT LIFE?**

Life is a **precious gift** from God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Acts 17:25).

Life is **problem-filled** (Job 14:1). There are all kinds of problems we'll have to face as long as we live on this earth.

Life is **passing** (James 4:14; Heb. 9:27; 11:13,16). Death is coming to all. There is no escaping it. But it is not the end of our existence. There is a better place for the child of God (Phil. 1:21-23; Rev. 14:13).

Life is **preparation time** for the future (2 Tim. 4:6-8). As a child of God we do not live “for this world” nor to see what we can obtain, but “for the Lord” (Phil. 1:21).

The child of God remembers he belongs to the Lord. Our lives must be guided and governed by God's Will. If it is, then we can be thankful for the time we have on earth knowing one day it is going to end. As a faithful child of God, I must determine to glorify God in my life so that blessings can be enjoyed in the here-after.

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# IS AMERICA AT THE END?

Charles Blair

It is God alone who can read hearts. God gave this truth to Samuel in the long ago. God does not see things as men do; but instead, looks on the heart of individuals (1 Sam. 16:7). The end of America or any nation is determined by God when He sees there is not enough righteousness to turn the nation around. Proverbs 14:34 says, “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [is] a reproach to any people.*”

How bad is America? If we are left to trusting the media, we need to understand that it feeds on that which is bad. The question becomes, does this represent all of America or is it just a few? There is no way for us to know the actual numbers that are involved. There is an increasing amount of scandals in the nation. These scandals represent individuals who enjoy power and will do anything to get and/or keep it. The scandals also show that some individuals live very immoral lives. The question becomes, does this represent all of America?

If God sees fit to bring our nation down, we must know it would be because He gave up on the direction in which we're headed. On the other hand, if it does not fall, then God would see there is yet time to turn things around. This leaves us in the position of knowing how to view the world around us. We are not to love the world or the things in the world such as power, greed, hatred or violence. The message is, “*the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19). Our view must be to focus our attention on where we live and strive to win as many as we can to the cause of Jesus Christ.

The rest of the world we must leave in God's hands and devote ourselves to prayer for our nation and the world. If we stay at home and do not vote, then we in a sense believe God has given up on our nation. If we do what we can and cast our vote for righteousness, then we leave the matter of the movement of our nation in the hands of God. We cannot afford to be distracted from reaching lost souls, edifying the church and being benevolent toward all men. This nation has

always needed the Lord and more so even now. Let us pray, vote and continue to work for the Lord daily.

## JUDGMENT OF GOD ON NATIONS

The prophet Ezekiel wrote about God's judgment coming against Tyre and Zidon in chapter 28 and then against Egypt in chapter 29. Daniel, who was already in Babylon captivity having been taken in the first deportation, spoke about God reigning in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17). History tells us a great deal about empires, nations, thugs and rulers who believed their power was absolute. At times when evil seems to be the way of all men's hearts, God's people are reminded that God is observant and concerned about what men do with their lives.

In the days of Noah, God saw a world that could not be redeemed. It was a world where the wickedness of man was great and was growing (Gen. 6:5). At least the cause was addressed as Moses tells us that man's imagination was on evil continually. Long after the flood, the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim did not possess enough righteousness to stop the wrath of God from being poured out on them (Gen. 19). God would likewise deal with His own people in Israel and Judah. He would be forced by their yearning for evil to finally divorce them (Isa. 50:1). Israel would go into Assyrian captivity and Judah would a short time later go into Babylonian captivity. Both actions were a result of the judgment of God.

What we find in prophets like Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah and Isaiah is that those who were not God's chosen people still faced the wrath of God. The message presented is that at times evil grows and the hearts of men turn from trusting God. Then things happen and mankind tires of the effects of sin and start searching for answers about life itself. God is not now nor has He ever been powerless. When one argues that God does not care what we do, they are given examples of Tyre, Zidon, Egypt and many more. No civilization can reject

the knowledge of God for any length of time and survive very long (Prov. 1:7). The book of Psalms speaks about all the inhabitants of the world being in awe of God (Psa. 33:8).

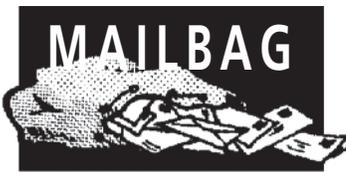
Aside from the days of Adam and Eve and Noah and his family coming out of the ark, there has never been a time when the righteous outnumbered the unrighteous. The idea then of all the inhabitants of the earth standing in awe of God is another way of saying that at times, righteousness and moral conduct is what the world chooses. Not even in such times of the revival of men's spirits do we find everyone participating. The sad truth from the Scriptures is that many will walk the broad way as opposed to the narrow way selected by the few (Matt. 7:13-14). I had rather live next door to moral or religious people than one who has no moral compass at all.

In the church, Paul writes to Corinth about any person “who is called a brother” (1 Cor. 5:11). He warned the Galatians about false brethren being brought in (Gal. 2:4). Jude warned about those pretending to be Christians that were spots on the body of Christ (v.12). My point is, that even though God's people have the truth, it does not necessarily mean that all will follow the way of God.

Those who are not ready to meet God must face this truth. “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31). Pharaoh believed he could cross the Red Sea just like his slaves (Israel) did. Assyrians thought they could enter Jerusalem like they had done to all other cities. Babylon thought there was no way they could ever fall. History contains the ruins of civilizations, families and individuals who thought the judgment of God is always far away from them.

We are all warned to be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8). Are you?

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I enjoy your publication. Very encouraging" ...**Gainesboro, TN.** "Olaf G. Bohannan has passed away" ...**Simi Valley, CA.** "J. T. Griggs has passed away" ...**Aberdeen, MS.** "I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths*. I enjoy it very much. Thank you for the work you do" ...**John Henson, McMinnville, TN.** "I would like my name and address to be placed on your mailing list to receive your paper *Seek The Old Paths*" ...**John S. Peelers, Dickson, TN.** "Thank you for sending *Seek The Old Paths* for so many years. They have been such a blessing to us and many others. After we read them we give them to preachers. I am sending you \$\$ contribution. Please list it anonymous. Thank you" ...**LA.** "I would like to subscribe to *Seek The Old Paths* after reading your June/16 newsletter loaned to me by a friend. May your work be richly blessed" ...**Cindy Meek, Owasso, OK.** "I am now preaching for the Morton Street Church of Christ in Denison, TX. I would like to request a bundle for the congregation here. Thank you so much" ...**Jess Whitlock, Denison, TX.** "Please cancel our subscription. We will be reading it online" ...**Larry Mazo, Cornoa, CA.** "Please UNSUBSCRIBE me from your mailing list. We no longer opt to receive your mailer under the name: Geoffrey Broderick. Thank you" ...**Treva Broderick, Abileen, TX.** "Enjoyed reading *Seek The Old Paths* for years but ask you to take me off your mailing list because I can read it on line. I do this in order to make the best use of the Lord's money. Thank you so much for such a sound publication" ...**Teresa Box.** "I would like to commend you and your sound publication as a breath of fresh air amidst so much religious confusion in our world today. Sometimes its hard to remember that God is still in control, but then here comes your sound words and we know that there is still hope. Let's all pray that America will come to its senses and open our Bibles for the truth of God's word and heal this sinful confusion. Pray for our leaders, they certainly need our prayers. Let us all reach out to those we know in our communities with the Truth. It's our hope. Let us be the city set on a hill for all to see by our example of Faith. There is a better way!! Would you please send our congregation 100 copies of your publication each month for distribution to our members? We will be happy to pay for them if you will let us know how much they cost. Thank you for your faithful work. Never let up or give in!" ...**James E. Davis, elder, Ruston Church of Christ, Ruston, LA.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: There is no charge for *Seek The Old Paths*. It is sent FREE to everyone who wants to receive it. This is made possible by the free-will contributions of both churches and individuals. Anyone who would like to help on expenses can make a check to 'Leoni Church of Christ' and mail it to: P.O. Box 7506, McMinnville, TN 37111.] "I became acquainted with *Seek The Old Paths* in mid 2014 when I started attending Oakey Boulevard Church of Christ in Las Vegas, Nevada. The publication was always available in our church foyer and I enjoyed reading it every month. In February of this year I began a 52-month prison sentence and relied upon friends in my congregation to send me the newsletter. As I would like very much to continue to read *Seek The Old Paths* on a regular basis, I am humbly asking to be added to the mailing list for the print addition if at all possible. I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and was baptized into His church just three days before my 2014 arrest for a crime I committed

two years earlier. As there are no church of Christ services at my institution (only Protestant), I sincerely miss hearing and reading God's Words without a denominational bent. Thank you for your newsletter. It helps keep me centered in my walk with Christ" ...**Thomas Beem, Federal Correctional Institution, San Pedro, CA.** "Thanks always for your good work" ...**Jason Gann, McMinnville, TN.** "Return to sender. Thank you!" ...**Ray Montcastle, Tucson, AZ.** "Bill Berner has passed away" ...**Livonia, MI.** "Thank you" ...**Michael Gilbert, Del Rio, TN.** "Please remove Owen Maynard from the mailing list. He has passed away" ...**Ambia, IN.** "Thank you so much for your publication of *Seek The Old Paths*. It is a very good paper, so much truth. May God continue to bless you in this work" ...**Carol Shadell, Beebe, AR.** "Thank you for sending your newsletter" ...**Betty Oliver, Dallas, TX.** "I am so thankful for you. You always stand for what is right. I have two friends that are in prison. Would you please send them *Seek The Old Paths* publication?" ...**Charlotte Vandiver, Russellville, AL.** "Thank you" ...**Carolyn Bassham, Bowie, TX.** "Please remove. We are able to read on the web. Great paper! Thanks" ...**Ann & Bob Cartney, Batesville, AR.** "I pray this finds you in good spirits and health. I just received my first issue of *Seek The Old Paths* and I enjoyed every page of it. It is all sound doctrine and that's what I want to hear. Thanks for adding me to your mailing list" ...**Ryan Leatherman, Ft. Worth, TX.** "Please cancel my subscription to STOP. Thank you" ...**Gail Nelson, Montrose, WV.**

*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked "not for publication." The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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