

# UPON THE ROCK

Jan/Feb 2008



Vol. 11 Issue 1

## Heartbreaking Questions

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Upon the Rock is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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## **“Will You Also Go Away?”**

**John 6:67**

Brandon Britton

This summer a young songwriter had a number one hit record entitled “Bad Day.” The lyrics were written as an attempt to comfort and encourage a loved one that although you had a bad day, all is not lost and everything will work out. In my opinion the reason the song was such a hit was because so many people could relate to it. We all know the frustrations and fears that creep up around us from time to time. We have all experienced those days where nothing seems to work. Days where things progress from bad to worse to intolerable. It is on those days that a good friend or loved one can make a great difference. Someone to remind us that it is just one bad day surrounded by countless wonderful ones. Sometimes it is only when we are surrounded by the bad that the good stands out bright and clear like a signal flare streaking across a dark sky.

There was one particularly bad day in the life of Jesus that began bad, progressed to worse, became almost intolerable, but finally ended with a glimpse of hope. If you don’t read your Bible carefully you’ll miss this day, not because of a lack of information about it, but because of an abundance of it, spread out over all four accounts of the life of Christ. No one author (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) tells the entire story, but when you put the four together, you begin to see a bad day that would test even the strongest faith. The death of the one person who understood Him the most, an attempt on His life, failures of faith, pressing and demanding, nearly riotous crowds, disciples who quit because there are no more handouts; who wouldn’t question the loyalty and commitment of even his closest friends on a day like this? So, as the sun begins to set over the wilderness of Israel, Jesus turns to His twelve most trusted friends and followers and asks, “Will you also go away?” It’s almost as if He

is saying “What next? Will I lose you too?” Have you ever had one of those days? Then you need to learn from Jesus how He dealt with His.

The day begins with bad news, terrible news. The one person on earth who truly and fully understood Who He was and what He was come to do, was now dead. Not just dead, brutally murdered. His cousin John had been beheaded by Herod the Tetrarch because he stood up to him and opposed his ungodly lifestyle (Matthew 14:1-13). What was more, it seems that Herod had also developed an interest in Jesus, and perhaps even issued a veiled threat on Jesus’ life (Luke 9:7-9). Can you imagine the mixed emotions flooding His mind. Grief followed by fear. One minute He is preparing to attend a funeral, the next He is plotting an escape route. What does Jesus do? He boards a ship and departs to go into a deserted place (Matthew 14:1-13). But before He can flee the country His apostles return from a very important mission and they are as excited as kids on Christmas morning.

Previously Jesus had sent His disciples on what we refer to as the Limited Commission (not to be confused with the sending of the seventy in Luke 10, going only to the region around Jerusalem), as opposed to the Great Commission in which they were told to go into all the world. They return with stories of souls saved, sick healed and demons cast out. But this was no time to celebrate. A great servant of God was dead and the Son of God was being threatened. Jesus took His apostles into a ship and departed for a place of privacy (Mark 6:30-32).

Sometimes a change of scenery can help you to shake the blues or a bad day, but that wasn’t the case on this journey. Once they arrive on the other side of the sea shore, the group climbs atop a mountain for a time of prayer, they notice a massive crowd of people (perhaps as

many as twenty thousand!!!) making their way toward them (John 6:1-5, 10). Can you imagine the frustration of trying to get away, to get out of time and have some time alone to grieve, think and pray, only to find that thousands of people follow you on your vacation? Could anyone blame Him if He shouted down the mountain, "Leave me alone!?" But He didn't. Instead He had compassion on them, taught them, healed their sick and fed them (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:33-44; Luke 9:11-17). Too bad His disciples didn't share that compassion. They wanted to send the people away. Just hours before they had been all too willing to be powerful ambassadors preaching, healing and whipping up on devils, but now it's the end of the day, everyone is tired and hungry and they are not so eager to be servants who will feed the needy. Who wouldn't want to be a renowned evangelist and miracle worker and who would want to be a waiter? You can almost picture the disappointment on His face as they proved to be lacking in compassion for the hungry and lacking in faith to provide a meal. How could they be so close to Jesus for so long and so unlike Him? He only cares for others, they only care for themselves. Do you think He ever thought to Himself, "I am going to entrust the work I'm giving my life for to these selfish men?" If He did, who could have blamed Him. As bad as this was, it was about to get worse. After meeting all of the needs of the people, how do they respond? Gratitude? Service? Obedience? No, they decide to take Him by force and make Him their King (John 6:15). They had their own ideas and selfish ambitions concerning the Lord and were willing to go to great lengths to obtain them. Add to His grief, fear and disappointment, the feeling of being used.

Down below in the sea things weren't looking much better. The apostles who, in the past twenty-four hours, had witnessed demons cast out, all manner of illnesses healed and thousands fed with five loaves of bread and two fish, would now be shocked and terrified by a storm and Jesus walking on the water. Apparently they had already

forgotten the miracle of the loaves and fishes due to a hard heart (Mark 6:52-53). The next morning they arrive on the other side, only to find that the multitude they were trying to escape had followed them to the other side. They didn't come because they repented or changed their attitude toward Jesus. They came because they wanted more free food (John 6:25-26). They were in for a big surprise because the menu for the day was not barley loaves, but the Bread of Life. Once they realized Jesus was only offering spiritual blessings, many of them turned away from following Him. His cousin is murdered, His life is threatened, everyone wants a piece of Him, His disciples don't care about anyone but themselves, the people have their own selfish ambitions, the faith of the apostles falters and the crowd turns away when they don't get what they want. It is at this point Jesus turns to the apostles and says, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). After the day He had can you imagine what was going through His mind? Could you blame Him for thinking the only thing left, the cherry on top, would be for His apostles to quit on Him too? I don't think this question showed a lack of faith on His part (He was omniscient, knowing everything that would happen), but was His way of challenging them to look deep into their own hearts and decide for themselves if they had the faith to follow Him, even if it meant enduring days like this. They too would lose dearly beloved friends to death for the cause of Christ; they too would have to put their lives on the line for the sake of the Gospel; they too would have thousands of people demanding their time, needing their attention, asking them questions, seeking the solutions to their problems; they too would find themselves in the midst of revivals that became riots in the blink of an eye; they too would suffer as brethren betrayed them and abandoned them; they would one day walk the same path the Lord was presently walking and He was preparing them for the journey. This day was not a test of His faith, but a training session for theirs.

It also serves as a great lesson for us to consider. Jesus once

encouraged potential disciples to first count the cost before making the commitment (Luke 14:25-33). He also warned followers not to turn away after putting their hand to the plow (Luke 9:57-62). Are we willing to pay the price?

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

From the editors and writers of Upon the Rock

**“Carest Thou Not That We Perish?”**

**Mark 4:38**

Jim Bullington

“On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee].’ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” (Mark 4:35-39).

It had been a long day; Jesus was physically exhausted and in need of rest. As was customary in many places, the crowds hungered exceedingly for the service which He offered, so much so that He had no time to Himself (compare Mark 6:30-34). However, even the Son of Man needed respite from the press of the crowds and had to excuse Himself to quieter climes occasionally. Knowing that He frequently exhausted Himself during His days of ministry, the Bible student has to step away and ask, "To what end did Jesus so extend Himself? Why was He so willing to place Himself at the disposal of the masses? What did He hope to accomplish by such long and strenuous hours?" The single answer to these questions is both simple and profound! Simple in that it is not difficult to say; profound in that it is difficult to fathom! Succinctly stated, Jesus did all that He did to fulfill His mission, namely to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); this was the whole of all that He did!

In the heat of battle, things that ordinarily are of little consequence can suddenly become of gigantic proportions. A storm on the sea is of little consequence unless I am in the middle of it, then it suddenly looms larger than life. Such was the case with the disciples on this day. The wind and the sea screamed so loudly in their ears that they could not hear the gentle whisper of the Savior; His words of comfort and protection were lost in the howling of the storm. Didn't they know that He had a greater mission, one that would not be cut short by a storm no matter how violent it was? Didn't they know that He would not allow them to perish no matter what it took to preserve their lives? Did they really think the ship would go down, the ship in which the Son of God was asleep? These and a hundred other rational questions were lost in the moment when faith deferred to dread and when rationality gave way to panic!

From where I stand some two thousand years after the fact and half a world away, it is easy for me to be critical of the disciples; after all,

I was not in the ship, and the waves were not literally lapping at my soul! It is easy for me to look at their actions, their lack of faith, and boastfully deny that I would act in any such manner. I would be strong; alarm would not move me; I would remain calm fully aware of the power and the will of Jesus to intercede in the affairs of life and deliver me from harm! That's what I would do! Right? As someone says, "In your dreams!" It is no easier to live faithfully and without fear two thousand years this side of the cross than it was to live in that manner two years before the cross! The disciples were just men, men with a passion for truth, but never the less, men!

"But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'" (Mark 4:40). It was not that they had no faith in the absolute and universal sense; it was that they had no faith in this circumstance; they should have had faith, but they didn't. Had they remained calm and thought rationally, they would have known that their future was assured in as much as they were in the boat with Jesus. What safer place in all the universe could there be than where they were, regardless of how things looked? When they looked on the outward things, their future seemed dim, but when they looked at the inward things, their future glowed brighter than ever.

"And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, 'Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!'" (Mark 4:41). The miracle brought them to their spiritual senses. Where a few minutes earlier, they seemed to totally forget the potential that was in the ship, now they were fully aware of who and what He was. When this recognition hit them, Mark says, "They feared exceedingly!" Where they had been afraid, now they were VERY afraid! The fear brought on by the storm was eclipsed by the fear that was generated within them due to their recognition of the person of Christ and His power. It was almost as if He said, "You think you are afraid now, I'll give you a real reason to be afraid!"

There are several relevant lessons for us contained in this biblical event. We will explore a few of them as we close. First consider the fact that regardless of the circumstance, Jesus never lost sight of His primary objective, that of providing the means by which mankind could be saved. In a similar fashion, as believers we must never lose sight of our primary objective, that of glorifying God. Or, to put in another way, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17). Remember the main thing is to always remember the main thing!

Secondly, remember that faith is reasonable and rational; only when we cease to reason according to God's will and word, do we really come to be in jeopardy. God is a God of reason and of faith; the two are not contradictory; they are complimentary. The disciples in the story didn't lack faith as a result of fear; they lacked faith because they ceased to think clearly and draw conclusions based on reasoned faith. Had they reasoned clearly, they would have known that their feeling of fear were ill-founded and allowed their faith to override their feelings. Feelings are real, but they do not always reflect the truth, nor are they always consistent with faith. Feelings should always be weighed against truth and subsequent actions must follow truth, not feelings!

Finally, a more obscure lesson is this: God always knows what is best! The disciples were in the presence of God and even when they thought He would have been directly intervening on their behalf, He was right. God is always right even when the circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. Apply this lesson (coupled with the second application, above) and consider Abraham's actions in offering Isaac. Had Abram allowed feelings to enter in, or had he decided that he knew what was best in spite of what God's will was in the matter, he doubtless would never have been called the father of the faithful. Yet

Abraham **refused to refuse** God, in spite of the circumstances.

Storms may come and go, but God is constant and will always act in our best interest. Our lost is to accept what God's will is in every circumstance and act in faith in all situations. We may not be the richest, we may not be considered the smartest, we may even be viewed as eccentric, but when all is said and done, God will own us eternally for His very own! Now that is a reward well worth weathering a few storms to receive!

Jim Bullington may be reached at 4080 Churchill Downs, Gainesville, GA 30507.

## **“Why Call Ye Me, ‘Lord, Lord and Do Not the Things Which I say?’”**

**Luke 6:46**

Phil Gear

Thomas had not been present the previous Sunday, and so had not personally seen the resurrected Jesus. When the other disciples told him about having seen Christ he refused to believe until he saw “in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side.” (John 20:25). Now a week later he is given that very opportunity when Jesus said to him, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” (John 20:27). There is no record Thomas ever did that. Instead he looked at Jesus and declared, “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:28). He was the first one recorded as recognizing the resurrected Jesus as Lord.

Many want Jesus as savior, but not as Lord. But he is called “Lord” over four hundred times in the New Testament, and he cannot be

savior without also being Lord. The word “Lord” means, “he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding.” Accepting him as Lord means surrendering control of our lives and selves to Him. This is difficult for most people to do. We prefer to make our own decisions, live by our own rules, set our own priorities and goals, and determine our own direction in life. We are like the little boy who kept standing up in his chair at the dinner table even though his mother repeatedly told him to, “Sit down.” She finally physically sat him in the chair and told him to stay there. With a defiant look on his face he looked at her and said, “I may be sitting on the outside, but I’m standing on the inside.” Too often we go through the motions of doing what Jesus said, while “standing on the inside.”

Many who claim to accept lordship of Christ deny it with their lives. In response that attitude Jesus asked a very sobering question in Luke 6:46, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” In this question he calls on us to make his lordship as more than just empty words. He challenges us to make him truly the one to whom we belong, the one who has the power of deciding over us. There are two things involved in making him “Lord.”

### **RECOGNIZING WHO IS IN CONTROL**

Occasionally you see a bumper sticker that says, “Jesus is my co-pilot.” That sounds good on the surface, but it actually is not a biblical concept at all. Saying he is my “co-pilot” implies that I have some say in where we are going, but that is taking too much authority for myself. Jesus is not content to ride in the passenger seat. If he cannot be in the driver’s seat he will not even get in the car. He expects to be both driver and navigator.

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” This compelling question forces us to consider the depth of our

commitment to making him the ruler of our lives. He is asking us to think seriously about who is on the throne in our lives. Do we do what he says only when it is what we would do anyway? Do we do what he says only when it makes sense to us? Do we do what he says only when it is pleasant? If the answer to any of these is yes, then he is not truly the ruler and lord of our lives.

Too many are like the rich, young man who came to Jesus one day and asked, “Good Master (Lord) what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). The question was valid, but the young man was only interested in serving Jesus if he liked what he heard. So when he was told that inheriting eternal life would cost him everything he held dear he was sorely disappointed. “He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:22). Lordship was fine as long as he saw it working to his advantage, otherwise he was not interested.

Making Jesus our Lord means giving him total control of every aspect of our lives. We fall short if we call him, “Lord, Lord” and do not the things which he says.

### **REALIZING I MUST COMPLETELY OBEY**

God commands that we accept the lordship of Jesus because it is good for us. We like to think we know what is best for ourselves, but we are so often wrong. What seems to be the right thing often turns out to be a serious mistake. How many times have we tried to explain a wrong action by saying, “It seemed the right thing to do at the time.”? We simply are not always capable of seeing the ultimate consequences of every decision we make, and so pay dearly for our mistakes. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12).

Recognizing Jesus as lord means doing what he says, exactly as he says because he knows best. Since he sees the end from the beginning he knows the ultimate consequences of our decisions. He also knows how we can avoid those unpleasant consequences, and so make our lives better. But that requires obeying him completely. Otherwise we are just mouthing words when we call him “lord.”

## CONCLUSION

All of us will, at some point, recognize the lordship of Jesus. We can do so here in this life when it will result in our salvation, or we can do it on the day of Judgment when it will be too late. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11). But lordship means accepting him as the one to whom we belong, the one who has the power of deciding over us. Anything less is just lip-service. “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

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Check out our new website:

**[www.upon-the-rock.org](http://www.upon-the-rock.org)**

Please be patient with us as we build up  
this website.

UPON THE ROCK LECTURESHIP  
February 23-24, 2008  
Theme: How God Treats Sinners

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2008**

9:00 am: How God Treated Adam and Eve (AJ Cox)

10:00 am: How God Treated Peter (Phil Grear)

11:00 am: How God Treated Judas (Bill Threet)

12:00-1:30 Lunch will be provided

1:30 pm How God Treated the Woman at the Well (Mike Gors)

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2008**

9:30 am: Could an Infinitely Loving God Send Lost Humanity to a Place of  
Eternal Punishment? 1 (Jim Bullington)

10:30 am: Could an Infinitely Loving God Send Lost Humanity to a Place  
of Eternal Punishment? 2 (Jim Bullington)

1:30 pm: How God Treated the Woman Caught in Adultery (Joey Davis)

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Sunday Bible Study 9:30 am  
Sunday Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm

**ELDERS**

Mike Haviland—Brian Huffman  
Larry Reynolds—Larry Taylor  
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## Is Christ Divided?

### 1 Corinthians 1:13

Patrick Morrison

The congregation of God's people in Corinth was plagued with almost every church problem imaginable. They were guilty of turning a blind eye to blatant sin within their midst (1 Corinthians 5). Brethren were suing each other in courts of law (chapter 6). There were problems in their observance of the Lord's Supper (chapter 11). They were squabbling over miraculous gifts (chapters 12-14). False teaching abounded concerning the resurrection (chapter 15). Truly, the church at Corinth was a church in turmoil. Of all the problems addressed by Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians, the first he calls to their attention is the division in the congregation (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). The church was divided into rival factions, each separating themselves under the banner of their favorite preacher: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:13). In an effort to awaken the brethren concerning their divisive spirit and lack of concern for unity in the church, Paul asks them a rather pointed, rhetorical question: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

It is sad indeed that such a question has to be asked of those who wear the name of Jesus. Certainly Christ is not divided. Perfect unity existed in the body and in the mind of our Savior. He was not divided within himself. Such a thought seems so ludicrous and incomprehensible. Can you imagine a divided Savior? Can you picture the Christ with one head and two (or more) bodies? If that paints a rather ridiculous image in your mind, it should.

It should be just as ludicrous to think of the body of Christ—the church

(Ephesians 1:21-22)—in the same fashion. Yet myriads of religious individuals can concoct such a monstrosity when it comes to the relationship of Christ to his church. Logic flies out the window when men seek to justify religious division. Many are under the impression that unity among believers is not a possibility, and that we must simply accept the reality of division within the body of Christ. There are those who have sought to rationalize rejecting the Savior's plea for unity (John 17:20-21), and continuing in denominationalism. Perhaps you have heard some speak of the division that abounds in religion today by saying that the denominations are a part of the church universal. There are a number of fallacies with this reasoning.

First of all, the Bible nowhere speaks of the church in this fashion. The church is spoken of in Scripture in the sense of it being the collective body of the saved (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). It is also spoken of in the sense of individual congregations of the saved meeting in particular locations (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). You will never find the church mentioned as a body that is larger than the local congregation, yet at the same time smaller than the church universal. In order for the prevalent thinking in our religious world to have merit, it would have to be shown from Scripture where the church is a body larger than the local congregation while simultaneously being smaller than the church as a whole. This is the very definition of denominationalism today, but it cannot be defended from Scripture!

Second, no explanation or rationalization on the part of man will ever justify division in the body of our Lord. Denominationalism is contrary in every way to the Divine plan for the church. In the agonizing hours leading up to his cruel, excruciating death upon the cross, our Savior found it necessary to pray for the unity of those who would follow him: "Neither pray I for there alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their world; that they all may be one; as thou, Father,

art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). The mission of our Lord was to bring all men (Jew/Gentile, black/white, rich/poor) into one spiritual body. “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Christ’s atoning death upon the cross made possible the unification of all who believe and obey: “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Ephesians 2:14-16).

It is impossible to read the New Testament and find any endorsement of denominationalism. The Bible enjoins upon us the responsibility to be united in teaching and practice. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). We are being fed a steady diet of denominational nonsense which is trying to force upon us the idea that we cannot possibly see the Bible alike. We are told that you have your interpretation while I have mine. Please tell me where such drivel can be found in Scripture? God expects His children to be joined together in heart and mind. “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2). “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Philippians 3:16). Brethren and friends, if God commands unity of us, then it is not an impossibility! When we employ the same rule in religion, we will be unified. Alas, let all who claim allegiance to the Christ take his word

as their only guide to heaven. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). To those who desire unity within the body of Christ, the gospel is our guiding light. Unity demands that we cast aside our own selfish desires and wishes. Much of the division that exists in religion today is because so many want their own way. We should be far more concerned about doing things the Savior’s way. Unity can be achieved when we have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:3-5). Unity will be achieved when we allow the Scriptures to speak as our standard in all matters religious: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11). “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17).

Is Christ divided? No, and his spiritual body should enjoy the same unity. It is so terribly sad that many will persist in their division thinking that the way of denominationalism is just a reality that must be accepted and cannot be changed. Those who love God, who love the Bible, who love Christ and the church, who love the souls of men and women, who love their brethren in the Lord utterly reject the puerile notion that true unity, we are obligated to be united so that the world may come to know Jesus Christ! We cannot sit back and accept the status quo. Division in religion will turn souls away from the Lord, souls for which we will have to give answer one day. Let us resolve to stand upon the word of God, and it alone, so that we may all be united in the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

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## **Lord, Are There Few That Be Saved?**

**Luke 13:23**

A.J. Cox

### **Introduction**

“Lord, are there few that be saved?” Jesus was asked this question as He was teaching in the cities and villages on His way to Jerusalem (Luke 13:22-23). Jesus responded by saying, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:23-24). Although Jesus did not provide a simple “yes or no” to the man’s inquiry, His answer is no less definitive. If many would seek to enter in, but would not be successful, it is evident that there would indeed be few, or a minority, who would be saved. No doubt the questioner was surprised by Jesus’ answer. Indeed, many today would be equally surprised at the Lord’s answer. In the paragraphs that follow we will investigate our Lord’s answer to this question and consider some reasons why many people will be lost.

### **Man’s Oldest Choice**

The Lord’s response to the question “are there few that be saved?” is reminiscent of Matthew 7:13-14 where He said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Jesus essentially says that more people will be lost than will be saved. More people will travel the broad path, as opposed to the strait and narrow way, because the broad path is the easy road to travel. It requires no commitment, dedication, or sacrifice. The narrow way, however, requires all of these. The choice between the broad way and the narrow way is really man’s oldest and most important choice. Man was first confronted with this choice in Eden when God commanded him not to eat of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil. God declared that if he ate of that tree he would surely die (Genesis 2:16-17). This was a choice between life and death. Similarly, Moses said to the Israelites, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). The choice between death and life is the choice that every person must make. At first glance it would appear to be the easiest of all choices. After all, who would choose death over life? And yet, Jesus said that more people would in fact choose death over life by their decision to walk the broad way, rather than the narrow. In Luke 13:24-30, Jesus provides some reasons why this unthinkable choice is made all too often.

### **Reasons Why Many Will Be Lost**

From Jesus’ response to the question “are there few that be saved?” we may infer some reasons why many will be lost. First, many will be lost because of a lack of effort. Jesus said, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). The word “strive” means “to agonize,” and is indicative of the great effort that is required to enter in at the strait gate. Entering the strait gate and walking the narrow way is not easy. It requires personal sacrifice and self denial (Matthew 10:37-38; Luke 9:23). While there will certainly be many people who are lost because of a lack of effort. These people know what they need to know in order to be saved, but they are not willing to do all that they need to do. Like the lukewarm Laodiceans, they are not wholly committed to Christ (Revelation 3:14-16). Those who suppose that they will be able to enter in at the strait gate with the “minimum” amount of effort will find themselves excluded.

Second, many will be lost because of procrastination and poor planning. Again, Jesus said, “When once the master of the house is

risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are” (Luke 13:25). With these words Jesus makes it clear that there is only a limited time to enter, or to make preparation for the judgment. The idea of a door being shut reminds us of the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). In that text, the five foolish virgins, who thought that they had made sufficient preparation for the marriage celebration, discovered at the coming of the bridegroom that they did not have enough oil. When the wise virgins refused to give them some of their oil they went to purchase more. In the mean time, however, the bridegroom came and shut the door before the foolish virgins returned. Though the foolish virgins begged the Lord to open the door to let them in He would not. Jesus concluded the parable by saying, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13). When Jesus Christ returns, a door will be shut. Those who have delayed in making preparation for the judgment, supposing that they will have the opportunity to do so at a later time, are running a terrible risk. The Lord will come as a thief in the night, at an unannounced hour (Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). If a person has not already made preparation by the time the Lord returns it will be too late.

Third, many will be lost because of a false sense of security and privilege. After Jesus declared that the master of the house would refuse to open the door, He said, “Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north, and

from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last” (Luke 13:26-30). If we are correct in assuming that the one who brought this question to Jesus was a Jew, then the “few” that were to be saved, in his mind, would be Israel, and the “many” who would be lost would be the Gentiles. How surprised he must have been to hear Jesus say that a person’s salvation was not secured by their ancestry, but rather by their personal conduct (their striving). When Jesus represented those who were shut out as saying, “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets,” He likely referred to that Jewish sense of privilege that was the undoing of most Israelites. Contrary to those notions of entitlement, Jesus indicated that a person could come from the north, south, east, or west and be saved. Christians must be on guard against similar notions of entitlement that can blind them to their need to continue to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

### **Conclusion**

Many are repulsed and offended at the prospect of a majority of people being lost, but history testifies to the fact that most people have always rebelled against God. It has always been the “few” who have been saved (1 Peter 3:20). The most important choice we will ever make is the choice between the broad way and the narrow way. Let us resolve never to allow a lack of effort, procrastination, or a false sense of security to keep us from choosing life over death.

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## **What Shall a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?**

**Matthew 16:26**

Larry Reynolds

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go

to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matthew 16:21-27).

From the text above we see the King; first unveiling His cross to His own disciples; secondly, the response of Peter; thirdly, the response of Jesus to Peter.

The first matter of importance is that Christ began to talk of His cross, and Peter at once objected. The contrast is made plain in the words, "The things of God—the things of men." The things of God are Christ's estimate of necessity and of method. The Son of "must go to Jerusalem, and suffer...and be killed...and be raised up." The things of men are revealed in Peter's thought, Lord, not that; pity Yourself, have mercy upon Yourself. The things of men will shun the method of the cross. Paul stated it this way in his letter to the Corinthians: "but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24). When we turn to the Acts of the Apostles and listen to Peter preaching for the first time on Pentecost, the man who shunned the Cross because he minded the things of men, said, "Him,

being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, You have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2:23,24). He came at last to know that when Jesus said “must,” He spoke with the authority of the eternal counsel of God. Peter had a perfect picture of the knowledge and wisdom of God to save the soul of lost mankind.

The question of great importance should be asked, how did Peter come to the point that he was willing to mind the things of God and not follow the things of men? The answer is that Peter must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. Peter would struggle in doing this very thing. He would go on to deny the Lord three times. The change in Peter would come after Jesus was raised from the dead when Jesus had breakfast with Peter and the disciples (John 21:15-19). Jesus would ask Peter three times, “do you love Me?” Then He told Peter, “Feed My sheep.” The test of discipleship is do we love God? Are we willing to deny ourselves and do what He says? “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21). Peter was willing to deny himself and follow Jesus. He was there in Acts 2 standing with the eleven preaching the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He would suffer many things for the cause of Christ. He would write letters to churches encouraging them to be faithful in serving the Lord. We can learn a lot from the life of Peter. His life should be an example to us that when we make mistakes to repent and seek God’s forgiveness.

Christ makes His final appeal by asking two questions: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). The judge will be the Lord and He will come in His Father’s

glory. If we shun His cross to whom shall we appeal? The last throne is His throne and we will stand before His throne. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). We know that God desires all men to be saved. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). This is God's desire but it comes down to our choices. What will I give in exchange for my soul? Am I willing to submit to the will of God and faithfully serve Him or will I mind the things of men.

We're told that around two hundred years ago, the tomb of Charlemagne (Charles the Great) was opened. The sight the workman saw was startling. There was his body in a sitting position, clothed in the most elaborate kingly garments. In one hand was his scepter. On his knee was the Bible. His other hand was pointing to a passage of Scripture in the Bible on his knee. It was Mark 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Friends, even if you could enjoy everything this world has to offer; things such as wisdom, wealth, power, honor, and friends, what lasting good will it do you if you were not washed in the blood of Jesus? In less than 100 years from now, it will matter little how wealthy you were or how powerful you were, or even how many friends you had. In less than 100 years from now, the only thing that will matter for all of us reading this is whether you had a relationship with Christ.

Don't be short-sighted. Life is here today and gone tomorrow. Then What?

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# UPON THE ROCK LECTURESHIP

February 23-24, 2008

Theme: How God Treats Sinners

West Side Church of Christ  
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See the complete list of speakers and  
topics on page 14

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Tish Clarke  
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Celicia Grider  
Glenn Hitchcock  
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David Sain  
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Mike McDaniel  
Patrick Morrison  
Mark Mosher  
James Parker  
Rod Rutherford  
Paul Sain  
Tanya Silcox  
Bob Spurlin  
Robert Taylor, Jr  
Dan Winkler

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. HEAR THE WORD OF GOD - (ROMANS 10:17;  
MATTHEW 7:24-27).
2. BELIEVE THE WORD OF GOD - (HEBREWS 11:6;  
MARK 16:15-16).
3. REPENT OF YOUR SINS - (ACTS 2:38; 17:30;  
LUKE 13:3).
4. CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD -  
(MATTHEW 10:32,33; ACTS 8:36).
5. BE BAPTIZED FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR  
SINS- (ACTS 2:38; GALATIANS 3:27;  
ROMANS 6:3-4).
6. LIVE FAITHFULLY UNTO DEATH - (REV. 2:10).