



# The Voice of Truth



July 1, 2012

## Who Are God's Children?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Are all people in the world God's children? Are those who are disobedient to God, are they God's children, or just those who are obedient to Him? What does the scriptures say concerning these questions?

There is a sense in which Jehovah is the Father of all men. We are to *"be in subjection to the Father of spirits"* (**Hebrews 12:9**). There is one Father (**Ephesians 4:6**) of all human spirits, at death the human *"spirit returneth unto God who gave it"* (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**). Since God is the Father and giver of all human spirits, the spirit, at birth, is pure and holy. God cannot father, or give, that which is less than good. At birth, babies are without sin and in their purity altogether acceptable to God. God is their Father, they are His children. The Son of God recognized the purity and innocence of such in saying, *"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (**Matthew 18:3**). *"But Jesus called them unto him, saying, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God"* (**Luke 18:16**).

However, when the child is mature, sin enters, and separation from God occurs. *"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear"* (**Isaiah 59:2**). The mature person makes the conscious decision to do the wrong and leave undone the right (**Romans 6:16**). The sinful adult is no longer a child of God. He lost his sonship when he elected to sin. A person is either a child of God or he is a child of the devil. There is no middle ground (**Matthew 6:24**).

A good many people today seem to have trouble identifying the difference between a child of God and a child of Satan. John had no such problem and neither did any other New Testament writer. *"Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the*

*children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God"* (**1 John 3:9-10**). The habitual sinner - the one who makes sin the rule of his life - is of the devil. Such a person is already at home in Satan! The habitual sinner is like the devil and hence is considered his son, his offspring. Thus, not all people are God's children, but only those who obey Him.

There is something for man to do. The believer who shall not perish, but have eternal life is the person who *"doeth the truth"* (**John 3:21**). To do truth is to love truth, follow truth, and obey truth! These are the children of God. God abides in saints (not sinners) as they love, obey, worship, and walk in the light (**1 John 1:7**). Since God is in heaven (**Acts 7:55-56**), He does not abide in Christians in a bodily way. God abides in those who keep His commandments (**1 John 3:23-24**). Jesus had promised that God would abide in obedient people (**John 14:23-24**). God demanded that Christ be the Savior of those who obey Him (**Hebrews 5:9**). In order to have the Father and the Son, we MUST abide in the doctrine or teaching of Christ (**2 John 9**). We must do their will as set forth in the New Testament. This simply means we don't have the Father or Christ if we are not obedient to His will. Therefore, to be a child of God, to have God as Father, one must obey the commandments of the Lord (**1 Corinthians 14:37; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 7:21-23**).

The Bible tells us, *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God"* (**Romans 8:14**). The gospel is God's power to save; the gospel was revealed by the Spirit. The good news, the gospel, leads people to become children of God. When we follow the gospel (**Romans 1:16**) we are the sons of God. A child of God is a Christian, one who has been born of water and of the Spirit (**John 3:5**). Sons of Satan are minus the new birth. Sons of God are obedient to the faith (**Acts 6:7**). Sons of Satan are not. Sons of God have been translated into the kingdom of the Son (**Colossians 1:13**). Sons of Satan have

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not experienced such deliverance.

Not all people are God's children. One must abide in God (**1 John 4:13**). One must be in the family (household) of God (**Ephesians 2:19-22**). To be in God's family is to be

in His church (**1 Timothy 3:15**). People who believe, repent, and confess Christ can be baptized into the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). The only way a person can truly come to know the Father is to have been forgiven of their sins. This is a child of God! ♦

## **"You Can Be A Christian, Just Like People In The New Testament"**

By Jarrod Jacobs

Are you troubled by religious division? If you are, we want you to know that we are too! In fact, we believe that Jesus Christ is displeased with religious division. We believe this because Jesus said so in the Bible.

### ***Jesus Prayed for Unity***

Jesus prayed that all His followers would be united. Hear Him as He prays to the Father as recorded in **John 17:20-21**: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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."* This scripture shows that Jesus is displeased when those who call themselves "Christians" – followers of Christ – are divided. And we can learn also that it is possible for all Christians to be united. If it were not possible, Jesus would not have prayed for it.

### ***Unity Was Commanded***

When division among Christians developed during Bible times, Paul, an inspired apostle of Christ, charged them that there be no divisions among them. From **1 Corinthians 1:10** we hear him as he says: *"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."* The solution for division specified here by the apostle was for everyone to speak the same thing and to be of the same mind and judgment.

The Bible is not divided. The Bible does not contradict itself. It does not teach conflicting doctrines. So, we can end all religious division if we will let the Bible, and only the Bible, be our guide. Consider this: Many times, we find that men are not divided over what the Bible says; rather they are divided over what the Bible does NOT say.

### ***Christ Is Not Divided***

The Bible clearly tell us that Christ is NOT divided, and that division is the result of following men instead of following Christ. We read in **1 Corinthians 1:11-13**, *"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, 'I am of Paul'; and 'I am of Apollos'; and 'I of Cephas'; and 'I of Christ'. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"* Friends, the cause of religious division today is the same as it was then: people following various men instead of following Christ. Christ is not divided, and neither should Christians be divided. When we follow men, instead of following Christ, the Lord Jesus said that our worship is unacceptable to God. Hear Him, *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (**Matthew 15:9**).

### ***Today We Can Have That Same Unity***

Certainly we are able to understand the Bible alike because the apostle Paul commands us to keep the unity that the Holy Spirit revealed. *"Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all who is above and through all and in you all"* (**Ephesians 4:1-6**). This scripture shows us that Christians in the Bible were united because they were told to **keep the unity**. One cannot keep what he does not have. If we will all follow the **Bible**, and only the Bible, we today can have that same unity which Christians had in the Bible.

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***A faith that will not take us to worship will not  
Take us to heaven!***

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### **We Can Be Like Christians In The Bible**

It is possible to be just what Christians were in the Bible if we will believe and obey the Word of God -- the Bible -- like they did. In **Luke 8:4-8**, the Lord Jesus used the sowing of seed to describe how some people will believe and obey the Bible while others will not. In **Luke 8:11-15** the Lord Jesus told what the parable meant. He explained that "The seed is the word of God." A fundamental truth is that a certain kind of seed will always produce its own kind. When we plant a seed of corn, we know we will always get corn, not beans or squash or something else. In like manner, the word of God -- the Bible -- when it is planted in our hearts -- when it is believed and obeyed -- will always produce Christians, not anything else. So we can be Christians just like Christians in the Bible, if we receive that same seed in our hearts -- unmixed with the commandments and doctrines of men -- and we believe and obey the Bible like they did -- nothing more and nothing less.

#### **How People Became Christians In The Bible**

It is easy to understand how people became Christians in the Bible. The Lord's instructions are plain, and the numerous examples God has given in His Word are simple.

**1. They Believed in Christ** - The Bible tells us that the Philippian jailor brought them, Paul and Silas, out "and said, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway*" (**Acts 16:30-33**).

**2. They Repented of Their Sins** - "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be bap-*

*tized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ... they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls"* (**Acts 2:37-41**).

**3. They Confessed Christ** - "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (**Acts 8:35-38**).

**4. They Were Baptized** - "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (**Acts 22:16**).

#### **How Christians Were Joined Together In The Bible**

When they became Christians, they were not part of any denomination because denominations did not exist in the Bible. Denominations resulted when men began teaching "perverse things" -- things not found in the Bible, and "drew away disciples after them" (**Acts 20:30**). We read in the Bible that Christians in each local area joined together to worship God, and every group of Christians was just alike in their faith and practice. They worshipped the same way; they taught the same doctrine; they did the Lord's work in the same manner; they had the same organization. They were independent churches which all looked to the Lord Jesus Christ alone as their head. They had no sub-head under Christ over them. Such as this resulted from the "perverse teachings" of men long after New Testament times. We encourage you to follow the Bible, and be a Christian just like the people in the New Testament. Credit: [www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com) ♦

## **The Nature Of The Kingdom Of God**

### **IS NOT**

1. Of This World (**John 18:36**).
2. Eating and Drinking (**Rom. 14:17**).
3. In Word (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
4. With Observation (**Luke 17:20**).

### **IS**

1. In Power (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
2. Righteousness (**Rom. 14:17**).
3. Peace (**Rom. 14:17**).
4. Joy (**Rom. 14:17**).
5. Within You (**Luke 17:21**).
6. Unshakable (**Heb. 12:28**).

## Backwards Looking Christians

By Jonathan L. Perz

Are you a backwards looking Christian? Lest you think this an unkind question, it is not asked in a derogatory sense. Quite the contrary. Phrased differently, we might ask, “Are you one who has begun to follow the Lord, only to be plagued by the constant tendency to look back at that which you have left behind?”

While speaking to those who would become His disciples, Jesus strongly condemns this tendency. “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). What is it that was left behind that continues to hinder our ability to press forward?

Family, friends and loved ones are one of the greatest attention grabbers for backwards looking Christians! Jesus warned, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds His life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 10:37-39; cf. Luke 14:26-27).

For many, being a disciple of Christ means leaving behind loved ones—this is because the path disciples choose to follow takes them in an entirely different direction from the path unbelieving loved ones have chosen. Looking back and longing after the unbelievers expresses a desire to follow them, instead of the Lord, therefore rendering one unfit for the kingdom of God. We don’t have to rejoice in the sad choice loved ones have made to follow something other than “The Way” (John 14:6), but neither should we regret our choice (i.e., look back).

Remembering places left behind is another stumbling block for backwards looking Christians. The Hebrew writer says, “And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heav-

enly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11:15-16).

The faithful will not long for the land from which they came. We are not talking about a hometown, so much as we are talking about that state that we left behind—the state of sin. The hymn that proclaims, “This World is Not My Home” expresses the desire of a disciple. It is not for that abode which was left behind, but it is for that abode which God has prepared. Lot’s wife is a prime example. We are not told why she turned back, but we are told that they were commanded not to look behind them. She looked back and she became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:17, 26).

Unless we are looking back to learn from our mistakes, our responsibility is to set our gaze and affection on Him who goes before us—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul articulated it best when he wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14).

Therefore, let us not turn back to things left behind. Neither let us set our gaze backwards. A half-hearted commitment to the Lord is simply not enough to become His disciple—a Christian. The Lord wants and commands—by His very sacrifice on the cross of Calvary—our complete and total devotion, service and affection. The next time that you feel the urge to look back, reflect on Who and what it is that you must remove your gaze from to do so.

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

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#### Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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