

## IS JESUS CHRIST IN US?

This is the time of year that God wants us to focus our attention on the first two steps in His plan for the reconciliation of humanity to Himself. Those steps are detailed in the Passover-Days of Unleavened Bread festival period. However, prior to the beginning of the actual festival, God requires us to make a personal assessment of our spiritual condition. He inspired the apostle Paul to emphasize the need for self-examination in advance of taking the symbols of the body and blood of Christ in:

1CO 11:23 *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you:...*

As we are aware from statements in Acts and in some of his letters, Paul did receive a number of visions and revelations from Christ. So, here he states that what he is relating came directly from Jesus Christ.

11:23 *...that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;*

As the gospel accounts prove, this was done in the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.

11:24-26 *and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

Taking the symbols commemorates Christ's sacrifice.

11:27-28 *Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner [MOF: "carelessly"; PHL: "without proper reverence"] will be guilty of [JNT: "guilty of desecrating"] the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

Prior to taking the symbols in commemoration of the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb, it is critical that we take time to analyze the direction of our lives in respect to our full commitment to the covenant we entered into with God at baptism and our continuing need for the sacrifice made by our Savior. We need to be fully committed to Him.

11:29 *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

Failure to examine ourselves before taking the symbols shows disrespect for the sacrifice our Savior has made to make eternal life possible for us.

11:30 *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [NRS: "have died"].*

A careless, irreverent attitude toward the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice reveals individuals who are adrift spiritually, who need to be brought back to their senses. Since severe and terminal health problems (both personal as well as those among close family members) receive immediate attention, God sometimes uses them to help shake up those whose salvation is at risk.

11:31 *If we would examine [NKJ: "judge"] ourselves, we would not come under judgment.*  
(JNT)

If we are consistent in analyzing our spiritual condition, we would not need God's discipline to the same degree as those who refuse to examine their spiritual state.

Clearly, we are exhorted to take a very close look at ourselves prior to commemorating the sacrifice of our Savior. In a later letter to the Corinthian congregation, the apostle Paul zeroed in on exactly what should be found when we perform an examination of our spiritual state.

2CO 13:5 **Examine yourselves** as to whether you are in the faith. Prove [PHL: “be testing”] yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that **Jesus Christ is in you?** unless indeed you are disqualified [NAS: “fail the test”].

Any examination requires the ability to closely view and recognize whatever is amiss with the object being inspected. We use mirrors for checking to see that our hair is in place and our clothes are in order. Those who work in medical science use electron microscopes to examine cellular tissue for abnormalities. We also need the ability to see what is out of order in the examination of our spiritual state. Unfortunately, we are denied the ability to see ourselves as clearly as God does. This was made plain to Samuel when he went to choose a king from among the sons of Jesse.

1SA 16:6-7 *So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before Him.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

Through human eyes, we don’t see what we need to see. Our sight generally ends with the physical—with what we can only see with our eyes! Just as Samuel was impressed with Eliab by what he saw with his eyes, so many people are impressed with what they perceive to be “spirituality” in others, such as: Mother Teresa (for the deeds she has done for others), or Bhuddist monks (for their kind demeanor and self-imposed penance), or others who perform physical acts of service for the needy. Attributing spirituality based only on what we see—on outward appearance—is not wise; God says evaluating spirituality can only be done by scrutinizing the heart. However, in self-examination we are all hampered in seeing our hearts clearly, because we must use our hearts (literally our minds) to inspect our hearts. And, there is a problem with our hearts; they are extremely biased:

JER 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it!*

This means that we can deceive ourselves into thinking our spiritual condition is better than it actually is. That was exactly what the Pharisees were guilty of doing:

MAT 23:25-28 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion [plotting to take advantage of others] and self-indulgence [concerned only about themselves]. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*

Some of God’s harshest criticism is directed to individuals whose lives are steeped in hypocrisy, who work at giving a good impression, but whose motives are selfish—wanting to draw attention to themselves. Incredibly, some who are guilty of this don’t recognize their guilt because their hearts have deceived them into believing God is pleased with them for what they do. Never forget: God is the one who warns us that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And whether or not we want to accept it, this warning applies to everyone’s heart—including our own!

As we approach the coming festivals, it is imperative that we **diligently** seek to comprehend the magnitude of the deceitfulness of our hearts. We must honestly assess whether we are allowing Jesus Christ to work in us, or whether our hearts have deceived us into only thinking that we’ve allowed Him to

work in us. Remember, if we're working alone on obeying God, we are accomplishing nothing in God's eyes:

ISA 64:6 *we are all like an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses** are like filthy rags...*

Everything we do under our power and strength alone is our righteousness. Our righteousness doesn't impress God because our righteousness isn't lasting—it's only temporary. Our righteousness is what we define as being right. It is our perception of what God wants! It is what we believe should be sufficient to satisfy Him! Permanent righteousness as defined by God is what He desires, and the only way that kind of righteousness can be achieved is by God working in us! Paul defines the difference in these two types of righteousness in:

ROM 9:31-32 *Israel, even though they kept pursuing a Torah [NKJ: "law"] that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers. Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting [NKJ: "faith"] but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works... (JNT)*

The latter righteousness was the type of righteousness performed by the Pharisees—an insufficient righteousness!

MAT 5:20 *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*

An example of this type of righteousness is given in:

MAR 7:1-6 *Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but **their heart is far from Me**'..."*

Jesus chastised them, not only because they condemned everyone who failed to follow them and their ideas of proper conduct, but because their only concern was adhering to physical rituals; they were not connecting the ritual to what was supposed to be taking place in the heart.

7:7-13 *"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." And He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—(that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Not only did they not make the connection between physical rituals and how those outward actions pointed to the need for internal change, the Pharisees created their own brand of righteousness; they decreed their own laws which diverted the focus off of God and onto themselves.

Let's now pick up this event in the parallel account in Matthew:

*MAT 15:10-11 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."*

By way of a parable, Jesus explains that, despite the accusations of the Pharisees, the bread eaten by His disciples was not defiled.

*15:12-14 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."*

The Pharisees were upset that Jesus had declared their form of worship was vain and in contradiction to the righteousness of God, as defined in the Ten Commandments. He then reminded His disciples that not everyone has now been given the ability to understand that outward acts of worship should impress on the worshiper the need for internal change; most miss the spiritual connection!

*15:15-20 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."*

Jesus shows us here that the reason the righteousness we perform alone is like filthy rags: we have a nature that corrupts and defiles. It originates from within—out of the heart. All we do under our power alone is influenced by this deceitful heart. If we have only ourselves on which to rely, this deceived condition leaves us in a state of hopelessness. To have hope requires another power to come from without to suppress the evil traits of the nature which emanate from within. The apostle Paul addressed this situation:

*ROM 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual [PHL: "concerned with the spiritual"], but I am carnal [GSP: "physical"] , sold under [NAS: "into bondage to"] sin.*

Paul understood the spiritual role that the mind plays in obeying God's law. Obedience to the law is to originate on the spiritual plane—but he and all of humanity are on a physical plane—still subject to the pulls of the flesh (1JO 2:16).

*7:15 I don't understand my own behavior—I don't do what I want [NKJ: will] to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate! (JNT)*

Paul had the ability to recognize what was wrong, but found it difficult to resist performing the wrong.

*ROM 7:16-17 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

By setting his mind to obey the law, he showed he agreed with—he saw the logic of—what the law required. When he failed to keep the law, it was only because he was too weak to prevent sin.

*7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to [REB: "the ability to"] perform what is good I do not find.*

The pulls of the flesh exert constant pressure to be satisfied and Paul found that by his own power, he was incapable of resisting them.

7:19-21 *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law [NAS: "the principle"], that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

The law he found was that even when he wanted to do what was right, he failed to do it because he was too weak to overcome the pull of evil.

7:22 *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

The desire of the mind with God's spirit is to live up to the standard God has established in the law.

7:23 *But then I find another [JNT: "a different"] law in my bodily members, which is in continual conflict with the Law which my mind approves [NKJ: "law of my mind"], and makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is inherent in my mortal body. (PHL)*

A different law was at work in his flesh—that law he calls the law of sin; it drives the body to fulfill its desires. The pulls of the flesh—influenced by hormones and emotions—drive men to act instinctively, without thinking. Paul said this irrational conduct conflicts with the desire to obey the law of God which he understood on a rational level.

7:24 *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death [GSP: "Who can save me from this doomed body"]?*

Paul understood that by his strength alone, he could not conquer the evil lures of sin. And due to his weakness, he knew that, with sin at work in his body, he was doomed to death. Due to his condition, he posed the rhetorical question: Who has the power to step in and rescue us from the power sin has over our mortal bodies?

7:25 *I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

The mind which serves the law of God should keep the pulls of the flesh under control at all times; it should rein in any desire that is contrary to what the mind knows is the will of God. However, the human mind alone does not have the capability to do this. This is why Paul states that Jesus Christ is the only one who can rescue us from the power of sin—the power of Christ must be in us through the extension of the Holy Spirit.

It is God—Jesus Christ Himself—who must enter into us and begin living within us—performing His righteousness in us:

GAL 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the {KJV: faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.}*

Having Christ in us means that His faith is also present. The faith of Christ in us reveals to us that human effort alone isn't enough to please God. We understood this before baptism. It was this recognition of our inability to perform the kind of righteousness that God asks of us that led us to repentance and the desire to form a contract with God which would guarantee us the outside force needed to perform godly righteousness. However, as time passes, we tend to be tripped up and side-tracked by the influences which work on our hearts. And that old deceitful heart once again leads us off the straight and narrow path to which we committed ourselves when God sealed the contract at baptism. This situation has been repeated time and again with God's people through the years.

There have been members of the Church who have known better, but have yielded themselves to the influence of their deceitful hearts. Some of those who fall into this trap get caught up into focusing more on the performance of physical actions than careful attention to their inner thoughts. They exhibit an outward show of righteousness, but nothing is changed on the inside. Those who attempt to go it on their own—without yielding to the presence of Christ in them—develop wrong attitudes and motives. It becomes more important to them that they are seen and praised by others, rather than silently yielding themselves to Jesus Christ and not drawing attention to themselves.

*LUK 18:9-14 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector [KJV: "publican"]. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

This parable is to help us reflect on our motivation to righteousness. The tax collector evaluated his relationship with God based on his recognition of his failure to do what God had shown him was necessary; the tax collector understood that without God's mercy and help, he was doomed. He recognized the need for God's strength in order to achieve the righteousness that makes reconciliation with God possible.

Unlike the tax collector, the Pharisee attempted to define righteousness as the way he obeyed God; he fasted twice each week and gave tithes on everything he had. The fulfillment of these physical activities was how he perceived and defined righteousness—not as God did. God defines righteous activity as keeping His commandments (PSA 119:172). When Christ walked this earth in the flesh, He never broke any of the 10 commandments. When He now lives in us, His faith requires that we follow His lead and also live without sin. Keeping the commandments of God, the Sabbath, Holy Days, tithing, etc. are things we should do! However, if we believe that our physical fulfillment of the commandments creates the kind of righteousness God wants in us we are as deceived as the Pharisees were. The presence of Christ in us—the power of His spirit—also produces an outlook of selfless concern for others. Concern, which prevents us from yielding to vanity, losing patience with others, becoming disgruntled when our expectations are not met, ceasing to be kind when others fail to respond to our kindness, etc. The Pharisees were devoid of that godly concern.

*MAT 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."*

Jesus emphasizes that the Pharisees were only concerned about what could be seen physically—not with what was taking place in the heart and mind.

The Pharisees believed they were in good standing with God, but their hearts deceived them. Since our hearts could be deceiving us, how can we know whether or not Christ's presence is in us.

The apostle John points out several key conditions that indicate the presence of Christ in our lives:

*1JO 3:6 **Whoever abides in Him does not** [PHL: "does not habitually"] sin...*

Jesus clearly stated that obedience to His word is a prerequisite to His presence in us:

*JOH 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."*

So, the presence of Christ in us is only possible if we are firmly established in obeying Him. That obedience must originate from the heart and be manifested in the way we relate to others.

1JO 3:10 *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: **Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.***

Those begotten of God—His children, those who have Christ in them—have two distinct fruits: they practice righteousness and love their brother. Since all of the Ten Commandments are righteous actions, and the last six involve the expression of concern for others, loving our brother is also included in practicing righteousness.

3:11 *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

John's emphasis that loving our brother is the message we heard from the beginning stems from his inference in 2:7 to the command in LEV 19:18 of loving your neighbor as yourself. Once God begins leading us to repentance—from the beginning of our conversion—we must exhibit love to our neighbor by keeping the last six Commandments.

This means the presence of Christ in us requires internalizing the Law of God.

3:24 *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And **by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit** whom [KJV: "which"] **He has given us.***

We know that Christ is in us through the conviction that comes by His spirit interacting with our minds.

Paul gives details of the interaction of God's spirit with our minds in:

ROM 8:1-2 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

We are not condemned because God has extended His grace to us and the power of Christ is at work in our lives, providing strength to overcome sin.

8:3-4 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us only by Christ's presence in us.

8:5 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

The greatest indication of the presence of Christ in us is where the focus of our minds is most often directed. If we have set our minds on the things of the spirit, the focus of our lives revolves around satisfying the requirements of the law in order to maintain a close relationship with God and exhibit our concern for the welfare of others.

8:6-9 *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

No matter what one may wish or hope, if the presence of Christ is not found in him, he is not presently a child of God.

*8:10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

The carnal self—what we were prior to entering the covenant with God—is to remain buried in baptism, dead to us; for the remainder of our human existence, we have vowed to surrender to the presence of Christ in us. It is the righteousness produced by His presence in us that will make the continuation of life in the spirit realm a reality.

*8:11-14 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

We are to draw on the power of God's spirit provided by the presence of Christ in us in order to take the action God's spirit reveals is necessary for us to take.

Christ's presence will prompt us to emulate Him. The life Jesus lived in the flesh was a life totally directed away from Himself and toward all others. If we are truly allowing Him to live in us, our lives will take on the same kind of attributes we find He exhibited while in the flesh. Due to His presence in us, there are things we do—not because we need to convince ourselves to do them—but because the spirit leads us to do them. They are the natural outcome of Christ living in us. The spiritual focus that Jesus presents in the Sermon on the Mount will become more and more evident in the way we think and act.

*MAT 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'" (NIV)*

*5:22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca! [JNT: "You good-for-nothing"]' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."*

In expanding the scope of the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment to the spiritual level, Jesus emphasizes that murder is the outcome of failing to control the mind—specifically the emotion of anger. If we do not reign in that emotion, it will lead to resentment, then to bitterness and then to hatred, which is the stage when another person's life becomes worthless in the eyes of the hater—at that point, murder occurs in the mind.

*5:23-24 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

Under the New Covenant, we are required to reflect on the effect we have on others. If we realize we have caused others to become angry with us, we should be concerned that they may develop hatred toward us. Our concern should be so great that we take the steps necessary to prevent our actions from leading them to commit sin. Jesus showed this was so important that we should take immediate action, even prior to coming to God to seek forgiveness. He goes on to give a principle:

*5:25-26 "Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny." (NRS)*

The point is: the longer a difference or emotional hurt exists between two people, the further out of control the situation will become. Immediate action should be taken to resolve the matter and bring about reconciliation. The longer action is delayed, the greater the risk that the offended party will develop hatred and the spirit of murder.

Another example of the change that should occur in our focus, due to Christ's presence in us is found in:

*MAT 7:1-2 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you."*

Since only God can read the heart, no man can accurately pass sentence on another man's heart. Attempting to do so can result in bearing false witness. The person judged could be slandered.

*7:3-5 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."*

This shows that the righteousness Christ produces in us is **introspective**. It focuses on what we should do, rather than on what others should be doing.

The entirety of Jesus' teaching contained within the Sermon on the Mount reveals that the production of righteousness depends on maintaining a spiritual focus. That focus can only be achieved by having Christ dwelling in us. Keeping that foremost in mind, we must be unwavering in our determination not to allow the deceitful heart to regain control over us; we must continually use the power of God's spirit to keep it suppressed—knowing that it is only by Christ living in us that the ugliness of that heart can be completely transformed. It is only by forsaking all that is not in conformity with God's way that Christ will live in, and produce His works of righteousness in, our lives.

Brethren, I hope, as we draw closer to the spring festival season this year, we can do so, having passed the examination requested by the apostle Paul in 2CO 13:5, having proved from that examination that Jesus Christ is indeed living His life in us!