

## IS THE CHURCH NECESSARY?

Many people think there is no need for a church. You can tell that they think this way because they never attend a church service, nor participate in regular Bible classes, nor financially support the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These people do not believe in church! So, are those folks thinking soberly? Should all of us think this way?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock, I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

When I say that "many people think there is no need for a church", I do not mean to suggest that they all necessarily are morally corrupt people. I do not believe this is the case. But yes, there are morally corrupt people who never give any thought to God, Satan, Christ, or His church. Paul described some of these people in Romans, chapter 1, when he wrote,

"Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless." [\(Romans 1:21-31\)](#)

Now Jesus' apostle was not saying here that **all** of those corrupted people were practicing **all** of those things, but that those sins were evidence of corrupt thinking and behavior. Those behaviors were signs of foolish thinking. And that kind of foolish thinking started when those people did not choose to **honor God**. God's righteous decree concerning those people is that "those who practice such things deserve to die." (Romans 1:32) The death that God sanctions here is the eternal variety, in other words, this is the second death, the punishment in that place that was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)

But you may say, "preacher, I have also known of people like that in the church!" Oh yes, I have known of people like that in the church. Do you think they will miss the punishment just because they are in the church? These people may have obeyed the gospel and been added to the church by the Lord, but they continue to act like the devil. Jesus once said, "**Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.**" (John 6:70) So, even Jesus' Twelve apostles had a "devil" among them. But did that keep Jesus from establishing and building His church? No. Jesus established His church and is still building it! That's right! The Bible says that Jesus is adding to the church daily those who are being saved. (Acts 2:47) But even among those saved by Jesus and added to His church, there will be those who will not honor Christ by their behavior. Those in the church who are wolves in sheep's clothing will be singled out in the judgment. Jesus said,

**"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.**

**"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:15-24) But "...everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." (Matthew 7:26) Friend, are you building by your behavior on a rock, or the sand.**

Yes, there are hypocrites in Jesus' church, but their end will be no different from those who do not honor God by honoring His Son's kingdom.

Well, what about those good moral people who are trying to live right, but they are not in Jesus' church and they do not want to be in Jesus' church? In fact, they do not think there is a need for a thing called "the church of Christ". Well, I would ask them this question, "What do you think of Jesus?" The answer to that question will get the discussion going.

Those good moral people may respond, "Who is Jesus?" Friends, are there good moral people in the world who have never heard of Jesus, and they certainly have never heard of Jesus' church? What about those people? Well, there are some people who think that church

members should not disturb these folks with the Good News of Jesus Christ! That's right! They believe the church should leave them alone and let them find their own way to heaven; after all, they are "good moral people." Friends, when will we believe what Jesus teaches that there are no "good moral people" who will go to heaven for their goodness? Someone once asked Jesus, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And [Jesus] said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to [Jesus], "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." (Matthew 19:16-22) This young man had an opportunity to hear from Jesus that no one is good, but that we must keep God's commandments. The commandments Jesus listed the young man confessed that he had kept them, and so the young man wanted to know, "What do I still lack?" This young man sensed that there was still something missing. And friends, in the world today among "good moral people" you will find this intuition that there is something lacking. Jesus told this young man to sell his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and lay up that treasure in heaven, and then come and follow Jesus. Jesus gave this young man an invitation to join up with Him and his disciples. The young man was saddened because he could not meet Jesus' qualification. The price was too steep, for he was wealthy. I wonder if he would have taken Jesus up on this offer if he was a poor man.

As he watched the young man go away, Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" Ah! Isn't that our question? "Who can be saved?" If we think someone can be saved simply by so-called "good moral behavior" then we are tragically fooled! Jesus looked at his disciples and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:23-26) You see, salvation is up to God, not man! God sent a Savior and His name is Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, that is, Jesus is God's Anointed person to save the people of the world. Without Jesus no person can be saved. And what does Jesus do with saved people? He adds them to His church.

Yes, with man salvation is impossible, but with God's solution all things are possible.

So, friends, what do you think of Jesus? Is Jesus necessary? Do you believe that He is God's Anointed person to save us from our sins? Or, do you still think that a person's good moral

behavior will get a person to heaven? If you think the church is unnecessary then you think very little of Jesus. That's right! You see, the church is God's idea. Jesus came to build it. Jesus' apostle Paul wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he [God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love." (Eph 1:3-4) Then down in verse 20, we read, "that [God] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And [God] put all things under [Jesus'] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." (Eph 1:20-23)

Yes, friends, Jesus is the Ruler and Savior of His body, the church. If you are NOT in His church, Jesus is NOT your savior. Friends, the world needs a Savior, and the world needs the Savior's church. What do you think of church of Christ?