

Questions & Answers

QUESTION: Isn't the church full of hypocrites?

ANSWER: There ARE hypocrites in the church, yes, but to say the church is FULL of them is an overstatement. The dictionary defines a hypocrite as **someone who pretends to be what he or she is not**, and the word comes from a Greek word meaning to act, as in a play. It also has the distinct meaning of one who PRETENDS to be more pious or virtuous than they really are. **A TRUE Christian is NOT pretending to be something he or she is not, but rather is IN the PROCESS of BECOMING what God wants him or her to be.** If I say, "Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet," meaning that I am not perfect, that does not make me a hypocrite, and I am not pretending to be something I am not. Understand the difference. A true Christian is forgiven and on their way to heaven ONLY by the grace of God, not because they are any better than anyone else.

(For more information on salvation by grace through faith, see "Can You Earn Your Way to Heaven By Good Works?" below)

Now, what did Jesus teach about HYPOCRITES in the church? Jesus had a lot to say AGAINST the hypocrites of His day, specifically the Pharisees, who thought they were better than everyone else because they supposedly kept all the rules THEY had made up, and said were God's rules. Also, Jesus' parables in Matthew 13:24-50 tell us that evil men and false prophets will infiltrate God's kingdom (the church), and **they will LOOK like God's people on the outside**, but they will be false. Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23 that MANY will say to Him at the judgment that they did many things in His name, but He will say **"I NEVER KNEW YOU!"** (Notice, Jesus says "I NEVER knew you," not, "I USED to know you, but you lost your salvation!"). As to why God allows it to happen, it really goes back to **the original "WHY" question of all time:** "why did God create Adam and Eve if He knew they would sin?" The fact is, He DID create them knowing they would eventually sin, and the earth is still under the curse of sin, and that is why there is death, suffering, and **evil men who lead others astray** (just as the serpent deceived Eve and led her astray). Just as Adam and Eve had to have a CHOICE between good and evil **in order to CHOOSE God with their own FREE WILL**, God allows false teaching and evil men masquerading as Christians, **in order for us to CHOOSE the TRUTH** from among all the LIES of Satan. Satan will be destroyed and all evil will be done away with when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom on earth, **at "the end of this age"** (Matt. 13:39). Then there will be no more pain, no more sorrow, no more sin (Rev. 21:4), and it is THEN that God removes all the false prophets and false, so-called believers from among His people. All throughout the Bible, God promises that He WILL judge ALL SIN and ALL EVIL, but not until the appointed time, **at the END of this AGE**, at the Day of Judgment. It is because of His grace and mercy that God does not INSTANTLY judge sin and evil, because He is still giving those people a **CHANCE to REPENT** and turn to Him to be saved.

• **II Peter 3:9** "The Lord is not slack (slow) concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering (patient) toward us, **not willing that ANY should perish**, but that all should come to repentance."

• **Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-42** "Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the **TARES** also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, '**An ENEMY has done this.**' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, '**No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to BURN them, but gather the wheat

into my barn." "...His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them, 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, **the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the TARES are the sons of the wicked one.** The enemy who sowed them is the **DEVIL**, the harvest is the end of the age, and **the reapers are the ANGELS.** Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be **at the end of this age.** The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

•**Read Matthew 13:47-50** (Verses 49-50) "So it will be **at the END of the AGE.** The angels will come forth, **SEPARATE the wicked from among the just,** and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Definition: "TARES" — "tares" are a weed-like plant that LOOKS exactly like wheat, but of course does not have the wheat kernel, so therefore it is of no value. Jesus used "tares" as an example of people who would **APPEAR on the OUTSIDE to be saved,** and members of His kingdom, but would actually be empty and false. We have Jesus' own words that there will be **many so-called Christians in the church who are NOT God's people and have NEVER BEEN God's people** - they belong to the devil all along! These are the ones who may clean up their lives temporarily, but they continually fall back into sin, because they have never had a new birth and a heart-change. These are the ones who are MISTAKEN by many to be Christians who have "lost their salvation" and turned their backs on Christ. These are the ones who "cause the Way of Truth to be blasphemed" (II Peter 2:2), because they CLAIM to be Christians, yet do not ACT like Christians, and **so others JUDGE** the church by them, and say, "**The church is full of hypocrites!**"

In II Peter 2, the Apostle Peter is speaking about false prophets and the people whom they ensnare, entrap, and lure into following their sinful ways. II Peter 2:18-22 is used by some to "prove" that a Christian can lose their salvation by falling back into sin and being "overcome" by it. However, nowhere in these verses does it say these people are saved, chosen, or redeemed, nor does it call them saints or Christians. In fact, verse 22 says, "...a sow (pig), after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire" which sounds to me like the pig was always a pig. In other words, an unsaved person was always an unsaved person. They may have joined a church, been baptized, and done a lot of the **outward things** Christians do, but they never had a new birth by giving their heart and life to Christ. A true Christian may take a few trips back to the old pig pen, but he will be miserable about it, and will eventually repent and turn away from it. He doesn't feel "at home" in the old pig pen and the mire (mud) anymore, because he is no longer a pig!

•**Read II Peter 2:1-9** "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as **there will be FALSE TEACHERS among you,** who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom **the Way of Truth will be blasphemed.** By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah.....then **the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations** and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment."

•**II Peter 2:20-21** "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them NOT to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."

These are people who have **taken refuge in a FORM of Christianity,** and have cleaned up their lives to some degree, but are not delivered out of the devil's kingdom, and have never

truly been saved (II Timothy 3:5). Jesus says in Matthew 13:32, "the **BIRDS of the AIR** come and nest in its branches," meaning they take refuge or "hide out" within God's kingdom. Ephesians 2:2 calls Satan the **prince of the power of the AIR**, and Jesus says the "**birds of the air**" are **representative of Satan** (see Matt. 13:4 & 19). These are people who heard the gospel, and sat in church and listened to God's word preached Sunday after Sunday. They "**KNEW** the way of righteousness" **INTELLECTUALLY**, but never actually surrendered their lives to Christ and entered His kingdom. Judas Iscariot is an example of this kind of person. He sat under the personal teaching of Jesus Himself, and yet **never truly believed**, because Jesus called him the "**son of perdition (hell)**," meaning that Judas belonged to the devil all along. But did Judas act like and look like the rest of the disciples? Yes, up until the point of the betrayal, because the other disciples didn't even know who Jesus was talking about when He said one of them would betray Him. Judas must have healed the sick and cast out demons along with the other disciples, because if not, they would have known something was suspicious, and would have suspected Judas as the betrayer.

•**John 17:12** "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is **LOST except the son of perdition** (Judas), that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

•**John 6:64 & 70-71** "'But there are some of you **who do not believe.**' For Jesus knew from the beginning **who they were who did NOT BELIEVE**, and who would betray Him." "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and **one of you is a DEVIL?**' He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve."

•**Matthew 7:15-17 & 22-23** "Beware of **FALSE prophets**, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. **You will know them by their FRUITS.** Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." (Verses 22-23) "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '**I NEVER knew you**; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

So, we see that there ARE hypocrites in the church - those who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. "Sheep's clothing" means they will look like a SHEEP (one of Jesus' own), but Jesus said "You will know them by their FRUITS." That means they will eventually be found out, because they will NOT show any of the REAL FRUIT of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Galatians 5:22-23). They may be religious, they may SEEM to keep a lot of rules and commandments, but they are only counterfeit. Just as criminals would not bother to make counterfeit money unless REAL money existed, Satan would not bother to counterfeit Christianity unless the REAL thing existed, and counterfeit Christians and HYPOCRITES could not masquerade as REAL Christians unless REAL Christians existed. Rather than worry about hypocrites being in the church (that's God's responsibility to take care of them, and He will!), why don't you make a COMMITMENT to Jesus Christ, and **BE one of the REAL Christians**, and really make a contribution to the Kingdom of God?!!

•**Romans 12:9-16** "Let love be **without HYPOCRISY**. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfast in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion."

•**Galatians 5:22-23** "But the **FRUIT of the Spirit** is LOVE, JOY, PEACE, longsuffering (PATIENCE), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

Can You Earn Your Way to Heaven By Good Works?

Have you ever heard someone ask, "I'm a good person.....why won't God let me into heaven?" God's word tells us that **NO ONE is GOOD ENOUGH to get into heaven** on their own merits, and **God does not "grade on the curve"** as we do with ourselves. In case you don't know what "grading on the curve" is, it is a method used by some teachers and professors in determining the grades to be given for school work. **If no one scored high enough for an "A" they just lower the scale**, so that what would have been only a "B" is now an "A" - how convenient! Now nobody feels bad or stupid, but is it really a good idea? Does it show REALITY, or **is it only a form of DENIAL?** The teacher wants to look good in the eyes of his or her associates by making the students look smarter than they really are! God does not deal with us that way. His standard is PERFECTION or NOTHING - **He does NOT lower the standard** to fit our selfishness, or laziness, or stupidity, or rebelliousness, or PRIDE! In Matthew 19:17, Jesus says that "No one is good but One, that is God", which indicates that the standard we must live up to is absolute perfection. Here are **three reasons WHY** we cannot come to God on the basis of our own good works, charitable deeds, keeping religious ordinances or rules, or trying to keep the Ten Commandments:

1.) No one can do ENOUGH good works CONSISTENTLY to merit, earn or deserve salvation or earn their way to heaven.

- Romans 3:23 "For ALL have sinned and COME SHORT of the glory of God."
- James 3:2, 8-10 "For in many things WE ALL OFFEND. If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. But the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless God, the Father, and with it we curse men which are made in the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so!"
- James 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in ONE POINT, he is GUILTY OF ALL."
- Romans 3:10-12 "As it is written, 'There is NONE righteous, no not one: There is NO ONE who understands, there is NO ONE who seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become worthless. There is NO ONE who does good, no not one.'
- Romans 10:2-4 "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but NOT according to KNOWLEDGE. For they are ignorant of God's righteousness (His perfect standards), and seeking to establish THEIR OWN righteousness, have NOT submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

2.) All our GOOD WORKS are TAINTED by SELFISH and IMPURE motives

- Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an UNCLEAN thing, and all our righteousnesses (good deeds) are as FILTHY RAGS; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities (sins), like the wind, have taken us away."
- James 2:4 "Have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with EVIL MOTIVES?"
- Matthew 6:1 "Beware that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be SEEN by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven."
- Proverbs 16:2 "All the ways of a man are CLEAN in his OWN SIGHT, but the Lord weighs the MOTIVES."
- Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that SEEMS RIGHT to a man, but the end results are the ways of death."
- Jeremiah 17:9 "The HEART is DECEITFUL above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"
- James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and PURIFY your HEARTS, you double-minded."

•**Psalm 139:23-24** "SEARCH ME, O GOD, and know my HEART; TEST ME, and know my MOTIVES, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

3.) No amount of good works or good deeds can CANCEL OUT the sins we've committed (only GOD can DO IT FOR US).

- Titus 3:5** "NOT by works of righteousness which WE HAVE DONE, but according to His mercy He saved us; by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit."
- Ephesians 2:8-9** "For by grace are you saved by faith, and that NOT of yourselves, it is the gift of God: NOT BY WORKS, lest anyone should boast."
- Colossians 2:13-14** "And you, BEING DEAD IN YOUR SINS, has He made alive together with Him (Jesus), having forgiven you all your trespasses, CANCELING OUT the handwriting of ordinances (requirements) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS."
- Romans 8:3** "For what the law (keeping God's commandments) COULD NOT DO, in that it was weak through the flesh (our human nature), GOD DID by SENDING HIS OWN SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh."
- Psalm 51:1-2, 10** "Have MERCY on me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies BLOT OUT my transgressions; WASH ME thoroughly from my iniquity, and CLEANSE ME from my sin. CREATE IN ME a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me."

According to Colossians 2:13-14, we are "DEAD in our SINS", and the only way we get our sins "CANCELED OUT" is by Jesus "NAILING them to His CROSS." There will be no giant scale on Judgment Day that weighs out your good deeds against your bad. The only way your sins can be forgiven and canceled out is to believe in Jesus as your Savior, and to accept His death on the cross and shedding of His blood as the payment for your sins. God's word tells us in John 3:16 that "God so LOVED the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOEVER BELIEVES in HIM should not perish, but have EVERLASTING LIFE." Because God loves you so much, He made a WAY for you to be SAVED from your sins so that you could have a relationship with Him. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and TAKE the PUNISHMENT for YOUR SINS so that you could be REDEEMED from sin, receive NEW LIFE, and spend eternity with Him. Jesus said, ".....Unless a person is BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). Salvation does NOT come by joining a church, following a certain religion, doing good deeds, or living a moral life. The Bible says there is only ONE WAY to become a child of God and to receive SALVATION and eternal life in heaven: YOU MUST be BORN AGAIN by ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST as YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). If you have prayed sincerely from your heart to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you are now a child of God. You have been born again, you have eternal life, and you have been SAVED from your sins (they are forgiven). God is now your Heavenly Father, and His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, has come to live in you! (Romans 8:9) It is your FAITH in the PERSON of Jesus Christ that SAVES you, NOT any religious works or good deeds you may do.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by GRACE you are SAVED through FAITH, and that NOT of yourselves, it is the GIFT of GOD - NOT of WORKS, lest any man should boast."