

A WORLD WITHOUT CHRIST

(Adapted from a tract by J.C. and Betty Choate)

Jesus Christ was born two thousand years ago in a small village in the occupied country of Israel. His parents were poor, with no political clout. He attended no university. When he turned 30 He had followers who were ordinary people. After only three years of teaching His particular message to the crowds that followed him, He was arrested, tried, convicted of claiming to be the Son of God – and he was crucified. But three days later He arose from the dead and changed the course of the world's history! Jesus Christ is alive!

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

When Jesus Christ was born into this world humanity as a whole was religiously dominated by a worship of gods and goddesses. People who did not worship these idols were called atheists! These religions dictated the behavior and the lifestyles of its adherents, even as religions do in the modern world.

The word "religion" is actually a general word that means "to bind." If a person practices some "religion" then he is "bound" by the beliefs that are taught in that religion. As it happens that everyone is religious because everyone lives more or less by their beliefs! However, a particular religion is an organized system or a network of beliefs. People who hold these beliefs cherish them as the highest of values that anyone could live by. And so there is worship. Worship is obeisance, bowing before our highest values, submitting to our highest values, keeping the commands and demands of our religion. Jesus taught that the greatest of commandments is to love God with all of the heart, soul, strength, and mind. Furthermore, Jesus said that the second greatest command is to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. (Mark 12:30, 31) Those two values are at the top of the Christian religion.

However, when Jesus was born into this world, these were not the highest values in the minds of idolaters. The world was dominated by the worship of gods and goddesses that taught a different kind of morality, a self-serving morality! The Greeks and the Romans had their gods. The Hindus, Mayan, and Incas had their gods. The highest values of these religions were sacrifices that were consumed in feasts or parties where fornication was practiced with both male and female prostitutes, all in the name of the gods. Human sacrifices were also practiced by these religions. In ancient India mothers threw their babies into the "holy" river

in honor of the gods. In Central America Mayan priests tore out the hearts of living humans as sacrifices to their gods.

These idolatrous moral values also spilled out into the general society in everyday expectations. Daughters could be sold in marriage by their fathers. Males held life and death power over their females. A man could divorce his wife for any reason, but the wife could not divorce the man for any reason. In most of these cultures a woman could not inherit property, could not speak in public, and had no rights beyond what was allowed by her father or her husband.

Abortion was freely practiced, even encouraged, in Greece, Rome, India, China, and in the western hemisphere. Babies who were born were still in danger of being rejected. Unwanted children were killed. Girls, weak babies, and deformed or retarded children were in danger of being killed by their parents. An historical study of records of six hundred families during one period in Roman history showed that only one percent of those families raised more than one daughter! Historians found a letter from a Roman soldier. This Roman soldier, away at war, wrote back home to give instructions to his pregnant wife. If the baby was a boy she was to keep him; if the baby was a girl, she was to kill her. In those days, parents who wanted to be rid of their newborns would take them to a wilderness area and leave them to die. And even if children were allowed to live, they were still under the authority of the father who had the power of death over them. A man did not have to explain his violent actions to anybody! Friends, this was the world in which its highest values were taken from the gods and goddesses.

In those days, a large percentage of the people were slaves, captured by conquering armies. That's right! Those in power could kill at will. Rulers often murdered their own family members when they thought their power was being threatened. Thousands of slaves were forced to fight and die in the entertainment arenas of the empire. These were the gladiators. They lived or died by the vote of the crowd, thumbs up or thumbs down! And no one was held accountable!

Fornication and adultery were not forbidden to men and were practiced in the worship services of the gods. Men were also allowed to practice it at home. But a woman caught in these sins could be punished with death. Homosexuality, lesbianism, group sex, pedophilia, and bestiality were acceptable practices. These perversions were often found in murals painted on the walls of ancient houses of the rich and the poor.

Slowly at first, but with ever-widening effect, the teachings of that crucified man in the first century began to impact civilization. His resurrection taught us about the life to come. Moral standards and a strong conviction of "right" and "wrong" began to invade Satan's kingdom. The Word of God was preached! Wherever God's Word has reached it has had a leavening effect upon society. Lives have been saved. Lives have been changed because of the teaching of the Savior, Jesus Christ. However, this has not been accomplished without persecution.

Satan's kingdom has not accepted the truth, nor given over to the influence of God's Word. Jesus' apostle Peter put it this way, "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever." [\(1 Peter 5:8-11 ESV\)](#)

Every individual in every generation must decide whom they will worship. What is your religion? What are your highest values? Will you serve God and His Christ? Or will you serve Satan and the gods?

Increasingly, atheism, humanism, and other forms of rejection of God have grown in their influence. The practice of legal abortion was an early victory. It became "lawful" to abort unwanted babies so that more than one and a half billion such murders have been committed throughout the world in the past forty years alone. Homosexuality and lesbianism are now lauded as life-styles on par with true marriage of man and woman. "Live-in" situations, without marriage, without any legal commitment, are no longer called fornication, but simply another form of marriage. Do we realize what is happening in our world? Satan has not given up! Satan wants all societies to accept his reign. Mechanisms of restraint rooted in Judeo-Christian theology are being overturned. The world is turning back to the atrocities of ancient idolatry! Friends, we don't have to travel to the end of that road to know its destination! God's Word informs us as to the end of that idolatrous road.

Jesus called it a broad road that leads to destruction. It was in His famous "Sermon on the Mount" that Jesus encouraged the people to **"Enter by the**

narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:13-16 ESV) Friend, is a ravenous wolf taking you off the narrow road?

Jesus said that wide road leads to destruction. The narrow road leads to life. Jesus' apostle Paul also calls the destination of that wide road "destruction." Paul wrote that "Many...walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." (Philippians 3:18-21 ESV) The word "destruction" literally means "ruin." It does not mean that the thing destroyed is taken out of existence! It means that the thing destroyed is ruined, that is, it cannot now be used as intended. It is ruined. I can ruin a chair without taking it out of existence. The chair's parts can all be in the floor, but it can no longer be used as a chair. Its purpose is ruined. And so it is with a human being who travels the road to destruction! He or she is ruined; he or she can no longer fulfill their destiny. Paul says to persecuted Christians that Christ "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." But not so, for the one who walks the road to ruin! Your destiny will not be a "glorious body".

Those ancient times of ignorance "...God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31 ESV) God has given the world the good news of His forgiveness. Why? Because God "...Desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all...." (1 Timothy 2:3-6 ESV) This is the testimony that can save you. This good news can set your feet on the road that leads to life. Even though that road is traveled by the few, you can be a part of the "few"!

This is the gospel, the good news of **your** salvation! The heavenly Father, the Creator of all mankind and this universe, wants you to experience your destiny, eternal life. Unless the Lord returns in your lifetime, you will die. But only then

will you realize the destiny that awaits you. Will it be destruction, or will it be eternal life? The choice is yours. What will you do?

If you believe in the heavenly Father and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, then you can repent of your sins, be buried in baptism by the authority of Christ, raised up from the watery grave to live in newness of life. Heaven will be your destination, and the New Testament of Christ will be your guide. Jesus said, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father.... Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:27-30 ESV)

Find a church of Christ near you and you will find someone who will help you obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though the world is falling apart, the gospel will change your life. It will change your destiny!