**Now That You Are a Christian**

*by Joe R. Price*

Becoming a Christian is the beginning of a new life in Christ, a life lived for heaven, and not for this earth. “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Now that you are a Christian, saved from your past sins, what does God expect of you?

*1. God expects you to live a new life, serving righteousness instead of serving sin.* Since a new birth has occurred, you are now to live a new life that conforms to the will of Jesus (Jn. 3:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17). On Pentecost, evidence of this is seen in the lives of those who became Christians in Jerusalem, “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). The decision you made to be saved from your sins by becoming a Christian includes the decision to follow Jesus, instead of continuing to do sinful things.

*2. God expects you to grow spiritually.*The apostle Peter declares we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). You are a babe in Christ when you become a Christian, but, just as parents feed their children so they will grow up, the Lord feeds us His word in order for us  to become strong, mature Christians. We must learn and obey His word in order to grow up from spiritually immaturity to full growth. We must practice what we learn in order to discern good and evil, do what is good and turn away from evil (Heb. 5:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:21-22).

*3. God expects you to be a faithful member of a local church of Christ.* When people became Christians in the New Testament, they gathered with other Christians to work together and serve the Lord in their common faith. “Now all who believed were together...” indicates this communion of saints as they banded together to worship and work at the command of Christ (Acts 2:44). With the New Testament as our guide, we learn that Christians in the first century did not float from church of church with a “membership-at-large” mentality or practice. They joined themselves with a local church of faithful Christians (Acts 9:26-28). Now that you are a Christian, God expects that of you.

*4. God expects you to worship faithfully.* Faithful worship involves spirit and truth. That means we are to worship with the right heart (right attitudes), and we are to worship the way truth instructs. “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:23-24). Our worship becomes vain and false when we follow our own dictates and the directives of men’s doctrines instead of the worship revealed in Scripture (see Matthew 15:7-9). Faithful worship means we are actually worshiping God with our brethren, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). Christians seize their opportunities to worship the Lord with enthusiastic faith. Now that you are a Christian, you should anticipate worship, not look for reasons not to do so.

*5. God expects you to set godly examples.* As others observe your life, your influence should help them follow God. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Christians are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16). Now that you are a Christian, use your influence to help others follow Christ, not hinder their faith (Matt. 18:6-7).

*6. God expects you to lay up treasures in heaven.*“...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:20-21). Now that you are a Christian, your priorities, goals values and faith will be defined by the word of Christ. Material things will not be the goal of your life, but tools by which you accomplish good (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Contentment, with godliness is now the most vital investment you make (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Without a doubt, to be a Christian is the most important decision you have made. Now, “seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).

**Did We Exist Before Life?**

Among the radical ideas promoted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (i.e. the Mormons) is the belief that everyone existed in another world before coming to earth. This idea permeates much of their literature. "Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal (physical) body" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [1998], 335). Thus, all men and women are literally the physical offspring of God the Father and pre-existed in another realm before coming to earth.

In studying with the Mormons, I was told we each chose to come to earth to do God's work and that our knowledge of pre-existence gradually departs after birth. The passage they turn to for biblical evidence of this notion was Jeremiah 1:5, which states, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..." They say this is proof God literally knew Jeremiah in person before sending him to the womb. But that is a faulty interpretation. When God told Jeremiah that He knew him before birth, He was referring to Jeremiah's calling as a prophet. That verse further states as much: "before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." He had already devised the plan to send Jeremiah before he was born, in the same way He foretold of John the Baptist's ministry centuries before it occurred (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:10). These prophecies did not demand prior existence of either man, and are no different than a couple naming their children before they are born. God is unique. He can see the future before it unfolds and is able to call "those things which do not exist as though they did" (Romans 4:17).

The only human to exist in a life before this one was Jesus, who occupied heaven before coming to earth to become a man (Philippians 2:6-7). But no one else made this transition. Every other human received his beginning in this life by the One who "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1). Hence, Jesus told His opponents, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). That statement would have no meaning if everyone has a prior existence.

Friends, we are on this planet because our Creator placed us here. The only hope we have of experiencing eternal life is through His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11). We did not have it before Jesus, nor will we have it apart from Him. And we certainly have no hope of reincarnation and returning to this world until we advance to enlightenment. If we want to find heaven, we must follow Jesus now (Hebrews 5:9) by obeying His gospel (Acts 2:37-41) and living in holiness (1 John 3:1-3). Only then will we reach God's dwelling place, which will be an original, first-time experience for us (Matthew 25:34).