

RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST (1)

By Keith Greer

In today's religious world, a subject that is certain to spark heated discussion is God's plan to reconcile sinful mankind to Himself through Christ. There are many different theories about how this reconciliation is accomplished. First, we must understand what reconciliation is and why we all need it. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says, "With regard to the relationship between God and man, the use of this and connected words shows that primarily, reconciliation is what God accomplishes, exercising His grace towards sinful man on the grounds of the death of Christ in propitiatory sacrifice under the judgment due to sin." Reconciliation reunites two who no longer are at peace and in harmony with one another. It brings together two parties who have been estranged. God is seeking to eliminate the enmity and bitterness that have separated two friends. All people need this type of reconciliation because all have sinned {Romans 3:23}. Let's examine together some facts concerning reconciliation through Christ.

All people received a death sentence. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." {Romans 5:12} Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden brought death into the world. Notice God's warning to Adam and Eve concerning eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." {Genesis 2:17} In Genesis 3:24, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, and their fellowship with God was broken. Death means separation. When we sin, just as Adam did, we become separated from God. This is the wage we receive for failing to obey {Romans 6:23}. Sin ushered into the world, death, misery, sickness, and all manner of trials. Yet, sinning remains an individual matter. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." {Ezekiel 18:20} Since all people are accountable for their own sins, at the final judgment, all will account for their conduct during life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." {2 Corinthians 5:10}

Who must be reconciled and to Whom? It is important to know how God answers this question. One of the popular religious creed books says of Christ, "that He suffered, was crucified, dead and buried to reconcile the Father unto us." How could anyone believe that God and man are reconciled on man's terms instead of God's? The so called Mourner's Bench religious system is predicated on the thinking that God must be reconciled to mankind; therefore, according to this definition, men are taught to pray to God to accept them as they are. Sadly, many people have walked down many aisles, thinking to obtain God's favor by having Him reconciled to them. The Bible teaches that reconciliation can be obtained only through Christ. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." {Romans 3:24-26} God cannot and never will condone sin. His righteous character is appeased when people turn away from their sins, and accepts the righteousness available to them through faith in Christ. This changed state is necessary in order to stand justified in His sight {Romans 8:7,8}. Mankind – not God – must change his heart, his conduct and thinking away from the world and sin! ***