

# What Would Jesus Do?

The initials *WWJD* are ubiquitous in our society. They are on bracelets, necklaces, T-shirts, hats and many other mass merchandised items. This merchandising encourages people to ask, “*What Would Jesus Do?*” Is this a proper question to guide our actions in the Age of Grace?

## **Whose Example Are You Following?**

“*What Would Jesus Do?*” is a question to determine what Christ would have done when He was on the earth. We are then to imitate that decision or action in our lives. In order for this practice to be legitimate, the context of Christ’s earthly ministry must be the same as ours today. There are two passages that help establish the context for Christ’s earthly ministry.

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: Romans 15:8

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Galatians 4:4

First, Christ was a minister to the circumcision. His earthly ministry targeted the nation of Israel.

Second, Christ’s earthly ministry confirmed the promises made to the fathers. These promises were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the establishment of an earthly kingdom.

Third, Christ lived under and taught the principles of the law. Christ is the perfect example of one who kept every moral, ceremonial, and civil requirement of the Law of Moses.

These three elements are evident in the teachings and actions of Christ. As Christ taught and sent His disciples to teach, the target audience was Israel. The message to that audience concerned the kingdom of heaven promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. Matthew 4:17,23

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 10:5-7

Christ also encouraged Israel to observe the Law of Moses.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. Matthew 23:1-3

At the end of Christ’s earthly ministry the audience was expanded to the nations of the earth. However, the message still focused on “the promises made unto the fathers,” the establishment of the earthly kingdom. Those nations were also to observe the Law of Moses, “all things whatsoever I [Christ] have commanded you.”

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:19,20

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:6-8

The ministry of Paul is in contrast to the principles of the earthly ministry of Christ. Paul’s epistles establish the context of his ministry.

Unlike the earthly ministry of Christ that *excluded* the Gentiles, the ministry of Paul specifically *targeted* the Gentiles.

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Galatians 2:9

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. Romans 11:13

In another contrast to Christ’s earthly ministry Paul dealt with “mystery” information rather than promises previously made by the prophets.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: Romans 16:25,26

Rather than encourage people to keep the Law of Moses, Paul urged people not to be subject to the bondage of the law.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Galatians 5:1-4

What Paul would do is very different from what Jesus would do. In the three areas of Christ's earthly ministry discussed, Paul did the exact opposite. Who then should we follow? Should we ask, "What would Jesus do?" or, "What would Paul do?" This is the Bible's answer to that question.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I [Paul] have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. I Corinthians 4:15-17

Be ye followers of me, even as I [Paul] also am of Christ. I Corinthians 11:1

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I [Paul] write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. I Corinthians 14:3

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. I Timothy 1:15,16

The pattern for believers in the Age of Grace is Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul followed the ascended Christ. He gave the pattern for following that same heavenly Christ. We do not follow the earthly Christ; we follow Paul as he followed the heavenly Christ.

### **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

*What would Jesus do* if someone asked how to be saved and receive eternal life? This question was asked and answered during the earthly ministry of Christ.

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from

my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Matthew 19:16-22

Christ's answer was two-fold. Keep the Law of Moses and sell all your possessions and give alms to the poor.

*What would Paul do* if someone asked him the same question? We see Paul's answer as he dealt with the Philippian jailer.

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. Acts 16:30-32

Paul's teaching of salvation was faith in Christ. Just as Paul spoke the word of God concerning Christ to the Philippian jailer, he wrote what to believe about Christ in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: I Corinthians 15:1-4

What we must believe about Christ to be saved is the sufficiency of His death, burial, and resurrection as the payment for our sin. This gospel concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was completely unknown to the twelve apostles who preached the Gospel of the Kingdom during the earthly ministry of Christ.

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. . . . And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. Lu 9:1,2,6

Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. Luke 18:31-34

In Luke 9 the apostles went out and preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. In Luke 18 they had no idea that Christ would die and rise again. The content of the Gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel preached by Christ and His apostles, was not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

If someone asks you how to be saved, what will you say? Will you do what Jesus did and tell them to keep the Law of Moses or will you do what Paul did and tell them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

### **How Should I Live My Life?**

*What would Jesus do* if someone asked how to live their life? Christ's answer concerning salvation involved keeping the law. This is also His answer to living life. He also advised

Israel to prepare for the coming tribulation and kingdom by taking no thought for their lives. This is in line with the means of salvation described to the rich young ruler.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. Matthew 23:1-3

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:25-33

As with salvation, Christ's answer to this question was two-fold. We please the Lord by keeping the Law of Moses and preparing for the kingdom promised to the fathers.

*What would Paul do* if asked how we are to live? As with salvation Paul's answer is the exact opposite of Christ's answer.

Paul teaches that we are to leave the commandments and ordinances of the law and breathe the free air of God's grace. Also, rather than ask us to sell all we have in anticipation of the kingdom, Paul admonishes us to provide for our own needs and for the needs of our families.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Colossians 2:13-16

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. I Timothy 5:8

Paul's instructions for a life pleasing to the Lord are different from those of Christ. The principles of the kingdom that Christ preached do not equip us to live in this present Age of Grace.

If someone asks you how to live, what will you say? Will you do what Jesus did and tell them to keep the law and prepare for the kingdom? Or do what Paul did, telling them to rejoice in God's grace and live as responsible adult sons of God, redeeming the time in this present evil age? (Ephesians 5:16)

## What About the Gentiles?

*What would Jesus do* if a Gentile came seeking a blessing? The answer is far different than we might think.

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Matthew 15:22-28

This woman is one of only two Gentiles ministered to by Christ while on earth. In each case the Gentile received ministry and blessing from Christ only when taking a position at Israel's feet. This woman received blessing for her daughter only after she agreed that she was a Gentile "dog," deserving only the crumbs from Israel's table of blessing.

*What would Paul do* if a Gentile came to him seeking a blessing? His response was far different than that of Christ. Paul's ministry focused on Gentiles and gave them opportunity not to eat of Israel's crumbs, but to be the very household and habitation of God.

And I [Saul] said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts 26:15-18

Now therefore ye [Gentiles] are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

Paul was sent directly to the Gentiles with a message of forgiveness and inheritance. Through his ministry alone Jews and Gentiles are reconciled together in the Body of Christ.

If a Gentile comes seeking ministry and blessing, what will you do? Will you do what Jesus did and demand proper submission as a Gentile dog, or do what Paul did and give a message of acceptance and forgiveness in the Body of Christ?

## WWJD or WWPD

The question, "*What would Jesus do?*" does not lead believers in the Age of Grace to proper decisions and actions. The question we must ask is, "*What would Paul do?*" Paul is the apostle and pattern for believers in the Age of Grace. We can make decisions and take actions that please the Lord only by following his example.

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