

Jesus Offers God's Forgiveness

Key Verse: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*
—II Chronicles 7:14

Selected Scripture:
Luke 7:36-50

ability to pay. But this was not the attitude of Jesus.

To be worthy of forgiveness the LORD's people must not only desire it, but also be in the proper heart condition to receive and appreciate it. These and related conditions of forgiveness are beautifully set forth in our Key Verse—"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves." This shows that the application of the text is to the LORD's people; those who are called by his name. In the present age, these are the

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Pharisees of Jesus' day to appreciate the spirit of forgiveness. Their attitude as a whole is well indicated by Jesus in his illustration of the two who were forgiven their debts—one owing five hundred pieces of silver, the other fifty. The Pharisee, in whose house Jesus was taking dinner, seemed unable to comprehend this spirit of forgiveness and generosity. The consistent practice of the rank and file of the Pharisees at that time was to heap heavy burdens upon the people, apparently without consideration of their

faithful followers of the Master.

Since, by nature, all of us are members of the sinful and fallen race, we frequently do those things that cause us to stand in need of forgiveness. But to obtain this forgiveness we must humble ourselves by acknowledging our need. If we are proud, and pretend that we do not need God's mercy, his grace will not be extended toward us.

Another condition of forgiveness, according to our Key Verse, is that we pray. The LORD has made a wonderful provision through Christ whereby we might approach him in prayer to seek forgiveness. Paul speaks of this as going to "the throne of grace." We quote, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. 4:16

Our Key Verse also emphasizes that we must seek our Heavenly Father's 'face' if we would obtain his grace and forgiveness. Our Key Verse suggests one of the ways in which we are to seek: it is that we turn from our wicked ways which caused the Father to hide his face from us in the first place. If we seek the LORD's face through prayer, and earnestly endeavor to keep our imperfections under control, we will enjoy his grace and fellowship at all times.

The LORD had 'a people for his name' in ancient times and, as we have seen, he also has a people for his name at the present time. We thank God that provision has been made in his plan of salvation also to have a people for his name in the ages to come. These, however, will be dealt with upon a different basis, for upon conditions of obedience they will be restored to actual human perfection. We read of that time, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." As a result, there will then be no more pain and death, and all tears shall be wiped away.—Rev. 21:3,4 ■