



the fruit ripens on the vines, then the wine that is at home begins to froth and stir, as if it wanted to escape." The same thing happens in plants: when the onion planted in the field begins to ripen, the onions that are at home begin to sprout again. And if plants have such co-operation with each other, will not the prayers offered be more perceptible to the dead? When you wisely approve of this happening in created nature, then understand that you are the beginning of God's creations."



We should pray for the departed that God will have mercy on them and forgive their sins. The Lord Jesus *"holds the keys of death and hades"* (Revelation 1:18). Therefore, the Church, by her prayers and by the sacrifice offered for the dead, has the power to open the gates of hades.

All the ancient Eastern and Western liturgies testify to prayers in memory of the dead. They are liturgies known as that of the Holy Apostle James, brother of the Lord; St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Theologian; also, the Roman, Hispanic, Gallican, also those of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Copts, Armenians, Ethiopians, Syrians and others. Even in its great number **there is not one where prayers for the dead are not found.**

"If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For Christ died, and rose again, and lived again, to be Lord of the dead as well as of the living"

(Romans 14:8-9)



APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

SHOULD WE PRAY FOR THE DEPARTED?



Certain non-Orthodox groups believe that *"prayers for the dead are contrary to the Christian religion... as it is recorded in the Bible."*

But should we pray for the dead?

Yes, for the same reason we pray for the living!

Why can't the living pray for themselves? Why do we pray for others?

Jesus Christ commanded us to pray for our neighbours, but He never told us that ***we could not pray*** for our "dead" neighbours.

The Apostles also taught us to pray for others. We are obligated to pray for:

All human beings. *"First of all, I recommend that prayers, prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings be made for all men"* (1 Timothy 2:1). It doesn't say that we should limit ourselves to the living, it says simply: ***for all men.***



It is illogical to pray at the bedside of a sick person for his health, and as soon as he dies, to stop the prayer. Which is more important, praying for your body or praying for your soul?

People who die are alive before God. ***We pray for them because they are still our brothers and friends, because they are still members of the Church.*** Nothing prevents them from praying for us in the presence of God. Why can't we pray for them?



"He is not a God of the dead, but of the living"

(Matthew 22:32)

ORTHODOX ANSWERS 16





ISN'T PRAYER FOR THE DEAD A LATER ADDITION OF THE CHURCH?

NO, we have evidence in the Bible.

"The next day they went in search of Judas (when it was necessary), to collect the corpses of those who had fallen and to deposit them with their relatives in the tombs of their fathers. Then they found under the robes of each of the dead objects consecrated to the idols of Jamnia, which the Law forbids to Jews. It was then evident to all why these men had succumbed.



So, they all blessed the works of the Lord, the righteous judge, who reveals hidden things, and they proceeded to supplication, praying that the sin they had committed might be completely blotted out. The valiant Jude advised the multitude to keep themselves clean from sin, in view of what had happened because of the sin of those who had succumbed.

After he had gathered among his men about 2,000 drachmas, he sent them to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for sin, working very beautifully and nobly, thinking of the resurrection. For if we did not hope that the fallen soldiers would be resurrected, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead; But if he considered that a magnificent reward is reserved for those who sleep piously, it was a holy and pious thought.

Therefore, he commanded this atoning sacrifice to be made for the dead, that they might be freed from sin" (2 Maccabees 12:39-46).

This book of Holy Scripture is not in the Protestant Bibles.

It was withdrawn in the 15th century because it does not appear in the canon of the Jews. It is a book accepted by the Church of Christ and was part of the Hebrew canon outside of Palestine.



The Jews withdrew it at the Council of Jamnia because it was a "Christian" book.

The Apostle Paul prays for Onesiphorus, who was already dead: *"Grant the Lord to find mercy with the Lord that day" (2 Timothy 1:18).*



WHAT DOES CHURCH TRADITION SAY ABOUT PRAYER FOR THE DEAD?

Addai: *"The Apostles have decided that the memory of those deceased martyred in persecution in good witness to the name of the Lord, shall be celebrated on the date of their death."*

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 315-386): *"We also remember all those who have already slept: first of all, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, so that, through their prayers and their intercession, God may accept our prayer. Then, also for the holy fathers and bishops who have passed away, and in general for all those whose lives have passed among us, believing that this will be of the greatest help to those for whom we pray."*



In the same way, we too present supplications to God for the dead, even if they are sinners. And we do not offer a crown, but we offer Christ dead for our sins, pretending that the merciful God will have compassion and mercy both on them and on us."

Tertullian (AD 155-240): *"We offer sacrifices for the dead on their anniversaries."*

"A woman, after the death of her husband, is bound not less firmly, but even more, not to marry another. Indeed, pray for his soul and pray that, while he waits, he may find rest; and that he may have a part in the first resurrection. And every year, on the anniversary of his death, he offers the sacrifice."



St. John Chrysostom (AD 344-407): *"It is not in vain that the Apostles introduced the commemoration of the dead into the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries; They knew that these souls derive great profit and usefulness from it."*

St. Ephrem the Syrian: *"For the dead, the remembrance made by the saints in the time of their lives is beneficial. Look here at the example of some of God's creations, such as the vineyard: "When*

