

What Is The "Lord, Have Mercy"?

Have you broken one of the Ten Commandments and sinned against God? Have you ever said a curse word, slept in instead of going to church, disobeyed your parents, looked at a person lustfully, or hated someone. You know you have sinned. The Bible makes it clear you and everyone other human being has sinned against God. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Since we have all sinned, it is important we all ask God to forgive our sins through our Savior Jesus. When we ask God to forgive our sins and put our faith in Jesus as our Savior, God does forgive us! However, if we do not believe we are sinful or if we refuse to ask God to forgive a certain sin we committed, then God will not forgive our sins because we are unrepentant. The reason God does not forgive our sins for this is because we are saying to him we do not want him to forgive our sins. So this never happens to us it is important we daily ask God to forgive our sins and daily receive his forgiveness. We can do this when we pray to him. We can also do this when we attend a liturgical worship service and say the Lord, Have Mercy. In this column entitled, "Questions About Christianity", we are looking at the different parts of a basic liturgical worship service. This month we will learn what the Lord, Have Mercy is by answering this question, "What is the Lord, Have Mercy?"

Last month we learned a typical liturgical worship service begins with the Invocation where worshipers are reminded they believe in the Triune God because the Holy Spirit brought them to faith when they were baptized. After the Invocation is said, the congregation responds with a prayer called the Lord, Have Mercy. The name "Lord, Have Mercy" comes from the Greek phrase *Kyrie eleison*. Usually it is just called *Kyrie* (Key-ree-ay). This phrase comes from the book of Psalms in the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, as well as from several phrases in the book of Matthew which was originally written in Greek.

Even though the Lord, Have Mercy is a prayer, people often sing it in liturgical worship services. There are many different ways to sing the Lord, Have Mercy. However the one constant phrase sung in every song is, "Lord, Have Mercy". When worshippers sing "Lord, Have Mercy" they are acknowledging they have sinned against a holy and just God who should condemn them to hell for their sins. For this reason, they ask God to have mercy on them and forgive their sins through faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The Lord, Have Mercy was first sung in Christian churches sometime before the sixth century. Since then it has been a part of Christian liturgical worship services. During the nineteenth century, American Lutherans added a Confession of Sins to go along with the Lord, Have Mercy. During the Confession of Sins, worshippers confess their sins to God and then sing Lord, Have Mercy. Afterwards the minister assures them God the Father has forgiven their sins because of the atoning sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ.

Since it is very important we confess our sins to God every day, it is a tremendous blessing that worshippers sing the Lord, Have Mercy towards the beginning of liturgical worship services. When they do, they confess their sins to God and are assured he has forgiven their sins through faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Then they can continue to happily and joyfully worship God out of thanks for this forgiveness throughout the rest of the worship service.