

YOUR SALVATION - WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Hebrews 5:12 says that by now we should be teachers.

Are we?

As a teenager I worked for a while with a man who hated religion and the Catholic Church in particular, because last rights for his mother were refused because of some peccadillo that the church considered severe enough to condemn her to an ever burning hell fire.

At another time I was a door-to-door Bible salesman and happened to knock on the door of a very depressed man who had been excommunicated by the Catholic Church and was convinced that he had been damned to hell-fire for evermore. Since for many years the Catholic laity was not allowed to read or own a Bible, he had no way of knowing otherwise. Even at that young age I knew enough to dispute that deception. Even better than making a sale was the glow I felt in seeing how his spirits were lifted in owning his first Bible.

As a sincere believer, should you be concerned with the many conflicting guidelines, admonitions and cautions of how salvation is obtained or maybe even denied by some ecclesiastical authority, degreed professor, or a self proclaimed prophet of God?

Could any of them be right? How can you be sure of your salvation? Did some man tell you, or does your assurance come from the word of God?

Man says that upon death a person immediately goes to heaven or hell, fully conscious, or maybe a place of transition called purgatory, which one might be hurried through to heaven by a generous contribution to the proper authorities. Can any of that be verified from the Bible?

Whatever your beliefs the goal is to spend eternity with Christ; we call it salvation. But it sure gets complicated when the many experts place themselves between you and God and tell you what you must do to obtain it or maybe lose it?

The many paths claimed by the experts.

There are those who claim to be the only true church, and unless you are a member in good standing then you're simply not going to make it into that higher realm. I am more concerned with having my name written in God's book of life than on some church membership role.

Some say you must be given your last rites (by the proper authorities) to cover any un-forgiven sins that may not have been properly absolved. Wouldn't that be denying Christ's sufficiency?

Others claim you are predestined to be either saved or lost and there is nothing you can do about it. If that is so, then why bother? Do you think Satan would love to convince you of a theology like that?

Some try to out-weigh their evil deeds by good works or strict obedience to the law. What is it about the gift of grace they don't understand?

Then of course, there are the "once saved always saved" group and the, "everybody is going to heaven bunch." We'll consider what God's word says about those views as we progress.

I heard a preacher of a very large denomination say that if one gave his heart to the Lord that morning in church but died in an accident before he could be baptized that evening, he was forever lost. I'll bet he has a perfectly wonderful explanation of the thief on the cross incident.

Have you ever heard of wearing a certain type of under garment or a special apron, that should you be killed or die unexpectedly you would be ushered into heaven? I know of two very large denominations that hold that belief. Of course, they would explain it so that it would sound ever so logical.

From the bizarre to the ridiculous, isn't it past time to question some of these sacred cows of religion, unfounded beliefs, doctrines and superstitions that have been passed down from generation to generation without verification from God's word? No wonder so many have difficulty believing in Christianity.

There are those who say that the Bible has been so corrupted through the years that they had to rewrite it or even write their own bible (usually to uphold their own private interpretations). Someone has even written a Hebrew New Testament and claims it to be more accurate than the original Greek. Does God need the imaginations of man to reveal His truths to those who earnestly seek it?

Of course, translators made mistakes, added words and made punctuation errors, but they can be identified. However, none are so severe as to suppress His message of salvation. Our God is well able to preserve His word, and the Holy Spirit is well able to give understanding to anyone who has a love for, and earnestly seeks the truth (II Thes. 2:10-11).

Then there is the trinity and its many definitions that no one seems to be able to explain. I have yet to find in the Bible that if you don't believe in the trinity that you obviously belong to some cult and are therefore lost; yet some will tell you that. Certainly there is the Father,

there is His Son and there is a Holy Spirit. It's very hard for me to visualize the Son who is right now sitting at the Father's right hand yet at the same time occupying just one body. Consider John 17:21-24: are we not to be one with the Father the same as Christ? There will be no difference in our oneness, but we will be separate beings just as He is.

Can a loving God hate?

God says he hates those who place themselves between Him and His people. He calls them Nicolaitanes (Rev. 2:15), Nico = lord over, laity = people. Wasn't this why Paul warned against the evil actions of Diotrephes (III Jn. 9-11)? There's nothing new, the same could be said for some today.

Are there those that seek titles and positions of high authority today so that they might lord it over the brethren (Matt. 23:2-11)? We are warned that there would be false ministers, who would seem so righteous, so knowledgeable, yet so deceptive that they would very nearly deceive the elect (Matt. 24:24).

And can you believe it, even antichrists behind the pulpit. You think not? Read I John 4:3 or II John 7 and ask yourself if there are ministers who don't believe that Christ (the Son of God) has come in the flesh? A survey of ten thousand ministers by the sociologist Jeffery

Hadden found that over half did not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and 80% did not agree that Jesus was the Son of God. You decide.

Don't follow a leader until you know what leader he is following?

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). How do they deny Him? Read Titus 1:16. Isaiah tells us how to expose their works, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). “He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (I John 2:4). No need to look for truth from this guy.

Have you ever heard someone say the law has been done away, changed, or nailed to the cross? (*A distortion of Colossians 2:14*). Paul warns us to follow a leader only as he follows Christ. He also gives us the chain of authority, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (I Cor. 11:1 & 3). Did you notice who was not mentioned in that chain?

Back to the question.

Who is responsible for your salvation? You can't depend on a priest, minister or denomination. Paul told the Philippians, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). And also the Galatians, "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:4-7). So the ball is in your court!

Did you know you have a personal invitation to go directly to the Father?

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:19-20). The holiest represented the throne of God; it was where the High Priest alone could go and plead forgiveness for Israel. But now Christ is our High Priest, positioned at God's throne on the Father's right hand as our advocate (Rom. 8:34). The ripping of the veil opened the door to the Father at the throne of grace; now each of us can make our petitions known, individually and personally, with no one in between except Christ (I Jn. 5:14-15). That's why we pray in the name of Christ and no one else.

No man, woman or spirit being should set themselves up, or be set up as the “*anointed*” door (Jn. 10:9) between God and man. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between the Father and man (I Tim. 2:5). You have direct access to the Father through Christ, and in that Christ died for you, you also have direct access to Him. So why go to angels, Mary, dead saints or anyone else to get to Christ? He would rather hear directly from you.

What does God’s word tell us about our salvation?

In spite of what Satan told Eve, man will “surely die”. All mankind is under a death penalty and needs a savior (Gen. 3:3-4), and there is only one source. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Why of course, isn’t He the one who paid the death penalty for us?

You do not have to measure up to some standard imposed by man before coming to Him.

“But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom. 5:8-9).

It is through Him, not man or any of man's organizations.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). Wouldn't the word *whosoever* include you and me?

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10). We can't earn it, we can't buy it and we certainly don't deserve it. It is a free gift, but --- He won't force it on you.

But what about obedience?

Like the good leader He is, Christ won't require of man anything that He has not Himself done, even to learning obedience. “Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto *all* them that *obey* Him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12).

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of

sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). Wouldn't obedience be proof of belief?

But will God save a person even if they have chosen not to quit sinning?

Paul speaks of a people who, even though they knew God (Rom. 1:21), and knew that what they were doing was worthy of death, would not change (Rom.1:32). Also, “For if we sin willfully (presumptuously) after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27). But for our frailty of the flesh we have an advocate (I Jn. 2:1).

We start the process with a simple *heartfelt* request, just as the thief on the cross did (Luke 23:42), “Lord remember me,” and from that moment He anoints and seals us (II Cor. 1:21-22). But let's not stop there. God is not through with us yet. Go to Hebrews 6:1-6 and make sure we understand the 7 doctrines of Christ, which leads us step-by-step to the seventh doctrine, which is perfection.

Mystery of the First Fruits

“But we, brethren beloved by the Lord, ought and are obligated to give thanks always to God for you, because *God chose you from the beginning* as His *first fruits* for salvation through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and your belief in the Truth” (II Thes. 2:13 AMP). Does that

mean we are better or superior in some way than those that came before us? Not at all, it's just that He has chosen some to be among the first fruits, or spring harvest and others will be among the second or fall harvest, their time will come (Rev. 20:5-6). Christ warned us that many are called but few are chosen. You are chosen because He knows you are capable of enduring through the tribulations of these end times (Matt 24:13), through the faith that He gives you (Heb. 12:2), None-the-less, He will not take your choice away from you. God is not in the process of creating automatons.

Speaking of Christ, Peter says, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. If we had it now would we need faith?

10 “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.

11 “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel

unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

13 “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:8-13).”

And we have this assurance from Christ Himself. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10 27-28).

The gift of eternal life has been offered and cannot be taken away by any entity what-so-ever, but you are obliged to accept it or reject it, look again at Philippians 2:12, Galatians 6:4-7 and those mentioned in Romans 1:18-32. So, who is responsible for your salvation?

You are!

What an exciting journey we have undertaken.

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