

The Old Paths

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“Have You Been Saved?”

Jarrold Jacobs

Jesus said in the Great Commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:15-16). To be “saved” from sins means to have the “remission of sins” (Lk. 24:47). Our sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7) when we have enough faith in the gospel (and in Christ, Jn. 8:24) to repent of our sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess our faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be immersed in water (Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16).

The gospel message is the same regardless of who we are, where we live, or our economic status. There are not many roads to Heaven, just one (Jn. 14:1-3; Matt. 7:13-14). Unfortunately, some people know they are lost and have made no effort to accept salvation in Christ. Other people have been misled by false theories and false teachers into thinking they are saved when they are actually lost. This is why there is no more urgent question than the question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30) Each one of us needs to ask the question, “Have my sins been forgiven by the blood of Christ — have I truly accepted the salvation He gives through the gospel?”

The world today wants to fight against God’s plan and deny the simple statement of Scripture

that says, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...*” (Mk. 16:16). Sadly, this simple statement has been distorted by many through the years. Let us compare what the world teaches with what the Bible says.

In contrast with Mark 16:16, **ATHEISM** teaches, “He that believeth and is baptized shall NOT be saved.” Atheism says there is no sin, there is no Hell to shun, and no Heaven to gain. This is because God Himself does not exist, according to them. This doctrine teaches the exact opposite of the Bible. We cannot be saved by professing atheistic theories (Jn. 8:24).

On the other hand, **UNIVERSALISM** teaches, “He that believeth not and is not baptized will still be saved.” This doctrine teaches that everyone is going to Heaven. The consequence of accepting universalism is to say that all religious and irreligious people will be saved. Universalism says God will accept us in atheism, Judaism, Mohammedism, Buddhism, Satanism, idolatry, or in anything else we wish to follow. Yet, that is not what Christ said (Jn. 14:1-6, 10:1-2, 9).

CALVINISM teaches, “He that is saved shall believe and be baptized.” This theory claims that God personally chose people to be saved and to be lost, and picked them by name before they were born. The Bible does not teach this. Calvin-

ism comes from the concept of “fate” in ancient Greek philosophies. Jesus commanded that the gospel was to be preached to “all the world” and to “every creature.” All who obey the gospel can be saved; He did not teach that the “elect” or saved people were chosen by God before the world began (Matt. 20:28; Heb. 2:9; Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16).

The doctrine of **CATHOLICISM** teaches, “He that is baptized as an infant shall be saved, then he can believe at age 12 in a confirmation service.” Yet, when we study Scripture, we learn that an infant is NOT a sinner, but is born pure and innocent (Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 18:1-4; Col. 3:25). Jesus said no sinner can be saved unless he first believes the gospel. The infant cannot believe (Rom. 10:17; Mk. 16:16). This theory of inherited sin has been passed down in several religious bodies (Episcopal, Lutheran, etc.), but it is not the gospel of Christ. Infants are innocent, but they are guilty of sin when they “grow up” and reach an age in which they choose to yield to temptation and sin (Jas. 1:14-15). Then, they are lost until they are immersed (Acts 2:38).

Lastly, **PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONALISM** contradicts Mark 16:16 by teaching, “He that believeth shall be saved immediately at the point of faith, and can be baptized later as an act of obedience.” Men such as Billy Graham, Joel Osteen, Pat Robertson, John Hagee, and Jack VanImpe are just a few of the popular preachers that have taught this human tradition through the years. The most popular religious bodies (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.) hold out the same false hope. However, such teaching is not the gos-

pel which saves by the authority and blood of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

Conclusion

Some folks might say that we can choose from any of these theories and find our "peace" and "salvation". Yet, Jesus said that there is just **one gospel** and **one way** to accept the gospel! The gospel is the same for "all the world" and "every creature" (Rom. 1:16; Jn. 14:6; Mk. 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Gal. 1:6-9). Therefore, we ask in love, kindness, and deep concern for your soul, "Have you been saved from your sins?"

The Church At Sardis

Aric Russell

Revelation 2 begins a series of brief letters to seven churches in Asia. Each of these messages includes specific information for each church, and there are lessons in each letter for us today. The fifth letter is to the church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6). Sardis was one of the oldest and best defended cities in the region and the wealthy capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia.

The message to Sardis is from the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 3:1). After Jesus identifies Himself, He quickly and clearly condemns the lifeless state of the church at Sardis. The end of Revelation 3:1 reads, "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." This church may

have had a good reputation among brethren, but they were spiritually lifeless. In other words, the church was filled with people going through the motions of religion.

Jesus then calls them to repent of their sin. He told them, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you." "Be watchful" is translated in the ESV as "wake up." What Jesus means by this is to start paying attention to their need of salvation, to stop being careless about their condition before God. At the end of verse 3, Jesus also notes the judgment that would take place if they did not repent. A dead church, and one unrepentant in its deadness, will be disciplined by Jesus Himself.

After the warning, Jesus encourages those in Sardis who had remained faithful. He said in Revelation 3:4, "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." There were some who had not participated in sin. Jesus said

that those who were faithful would walk with Him. That is, they shall be in a right relationship with Christ at Sardis.

Jesus makes a final promise to the believers in Sardis in Revelation 3:5. He said, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." The one who "overcomes" is anyone who can overcome the temptation of this world. The overcomer will never have his name removed from the book of life, and he will be confessed by Jesus in heaven (Lk. 12:8).

There is much to learn from this "dead" church. Let us do the work that is before us and serve God. Listen to what the Spirit said to the church at Sardis.

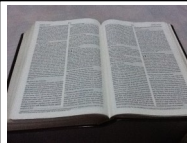
A Thought Worth Thinking

Solomon said, "*For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.*"

(Prov. 26:20)

Thought: Are YOU "wood"?

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