

The Old Paths

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“The Map”

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While riding with my youngest last week, he noticed different houses along the road. One rather large house caught his attention, and he asked about it. When I told him it was indeed a house, he said, “Well, people are in a house, and if there are people in that house then they need to come with us to church.” I agreed with his statement, and he then said, “Those people probably don’t know how to get to church, so we need to give them a map.”

I agreed with this statement as well, and then thought about that observation. Folks really do need a map if they are going to be a part of the Lord’s church and go to Heaven. The question is, “Where is that map?” As we read the Scriptures, we see that in fact, God has given us a “map.” This “map” leads us from earth to Heaven, through Christ (Jn. 14:6)! If we wish to have a “map” which leads us in this life, we can find it within the pages of Inspiration!

To get started right, we must know what we must do to be saved. Thankfully, it is the Bible that tells us what we must do to be saved from sin so that we can go to Heaven! Truly, is this not the purpose of any map — to tell us the best way to get from point “a” to point “b”? (In this case, we’re going from earth to Heaven!) How can men be saved

from sins? God has revealed the answer to us. Simply put, Jesus had to die so that men might be saved (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8). It is necessary then for men to accept the Lord’s conditions by which we can be saved. What are these conditions? Jesus, the One who said we will not go to the Father except through Him, said we need to believe in Him (Jn. 8:24), repent of our sins (Lk. 13:3), confess Him (Matt. 10:32), and be baptized (Mk. 16:16). In the book of Acts, we find no less than nine separate cases of conversion wherein men complied with the Lord’s plan for salvation, and were saved from sin (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10-11, 16, 18, 19).

The wonderful thing about the Lord’s plan for salvation is that those who are saved from their sins are then added to the Lord’s church! Acts 2:47 tells us that the “Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Often, men today create “maps” which say that salvation and the Lord’s church have nothing to do with each other. In the Bible, we see that this is not the case. In fact, when we read the New Testament, we learn that if we are going to follow that “roadmap” from earth to Heaven, we will have to follow the Lord’s plan for salvation and belong to His church (Rom. 16:16)!

This then begs two questions, “Just when did the Lord’s church begin and who established the church?” The answer to these questions are found within the Bible, too. The Lord’s church began on

the Pentecost following the Lord’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 2). This is a fulfillment of prophecy from such passages as Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, and Joel 2. In these Old Testament Scriptures, we find that the Lord would establish His kingdom in the “last days,” during Rome’s rule, at Jerusalem. It is from here that the word of the Lord would flow, during the time when old men would see visions and young men would dream dreams. In Acts 2, we see these prophecies fulfilled. In fact, it was such a momentous occasion that the apostle Peter said plainly, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ...”. How we ought to praise and thank God that He has given us these spiritual blessings such as a church to which all the saved people can belong (Acts 2:47)!

Finally, we will need to remain a faithful child all the days of our lives if we will follow this “map” to Heaven. Jesus told His disciples, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22; Mk. 13:13). Jesus later told the church at Smyrna, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The apostle Paul wrote by inspiration, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). In reading such passages, we see that it is imperative that we continue to be faithful and serve God all the days of our lives! It is necessary that we take on the mindset of the humble slave who serves his Master all his life (Rom. 12:1-2). In remaining faithful and belonging to the Lord’s church, we find that we can have a home in Heaven when Christ returns to receive His people (I Cor.

15:24; I Thess. 4:13-18; etc.).

Conclusion

In this article, I hope we can see that in order to go to Heaven, it involves having a right relationship with Christ; a relationship that is found in His church (body, Eph. 4:4)! In order to follow that "map" that leads us from earth to Heaven, it requires that we follow what the Lord says in everything, not just "most" things or "some" things (Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14; I Jn. 2:3-6)! This relationship is very special, and must be something we cherish daily!

Sadly, many do not do what the Lord says. We have many in this world who are not satisfied with God's plan, and therefore try to draw up "maps" of their own! Perhaps these maps ignore baptism, maybe they detour around the Lord's church, or it could be that some read a "map" which says that the very minute you begin your journey, then you're guaranteed safe passage to your destination with no possible chance for failure ("once-saved-always-saved")!! The problem with this is that since there is only one way to the Father, through Christ (Jn. 14:6), then any other "map" men may invent is not going to lead us to Heaven, but to Hell!! Yes, there are ways which "seem" right to us, but these ways do not have the Lord's approval and will lead us to death (Prov. 14:12)!

Seeing that these things are true, does this not give you the urge to go and find someone and make sure they have the "map" they need that will lead them from earth to Heaven? This is a responsibility each Christian has, you know (II Tim. 2:2). Yes friends, we need to give lost people a "map"! But we must not give them "our map." They need the Lord's "map"! Let's get busy!

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (Jas. 4:14-16). Each day we see how true this passage is. Don't allow another minute to pass without making sure you are right with God! Our life may soon be over. Then, what?? (II Cor. 6:2)

“Sentence Sermons”

- ◆ “An amazing amount of our thinking is done backwards. We first decide what we want to believe and then find good reasons for believing it.”
- ◆ “A problem not worth praying about is not worth worrying about.”
- ◆ “The time to teach respect for authority is the play pen; not the State Pen!”
- ◆ “Where you go hereafter depends on what you go after, here.”



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Thoughts From The Past

“Error never dies a natural death, it has to be killed with the sword of the Spirit I do know this, nothing, but nothing, beats old time gospel preaching and hard-nosed Bible study. This is what it will take to keep the church on the straight and narrow path. When we depart from the fundamentals, we take our first step toward apostasy. Could it be that we are more concerned about being politically correct than with being Scripturally correct?”

(James P. Needham, Guardian of Truth, November 16, 1995, p. 11).

Postscript: For those who remember, bro. Needham preached for the Central congregation in Owensboro in the late 50's.

“Not to know is ignorance, but to refuse to learn is pride.”

-- L.E. Sloan

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