

What does God say about today's churches?

What must the believer do? (See Q8-10)

THE LORD IS AT HAND

Q1. I sometimes wonder if God has saved me. If He truly has saved me, how would I know?

A. If you are a child of God, you will come to realize this blessed fact as you read God's word the Bible:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)

Both in doctrine (what you believe) and practice (what you think and do), you will fit more and more the Bible's description of a true child of God:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3)

If ye love me, keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

...as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence.... (2 Cor. 8:7)

You will also find that you are happiest living according to the **whole** Bible:

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (Psalm 40:8)

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:1a, 2)

If God has saved you, you will find definite, fundamental changes in yourself. Further, these changes, or "fruits," will not be temporary, but permanent, and always growing. You will humbly recognize that even though you rightfully deserved hell, Jesus Christ, in His great mercy and love, has done all the work required for your salvation. Consequently, you will live a life that praises and thanks Him for your salvation. You will *grow* to love God's word *more and more*, and also find that you have a strong desire to share this wonderful message of salvation with any and all. This is the *opposite* of how you would be, if you were not saved.

...Saieth the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:2b)

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrites, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that

ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (1 Peter 2:1-3)

...How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:2)

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Before salvation, we all love our sins because we are slaves to sin:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [slave] of sin. (John 8:34)

Thus, if you are saved, you will find that you hate your sins. After all, the Bible says that every sin is against our most holy God – "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight..." (Ps. 51:4a).

If you truly are saved, this means that God, in His love for you, elected you and decided to have Jesus Christ suffer eternal damnation on your behalf - for every sin you would ever commit. He then gave you a new soul and eternal life at some point in your lifetime. This salvation that God works can never be undone and man has no say in the matter. God saves those whom He wishes to save:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:4)

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (Romans 9:15)

If you are not saved, these are some of the statements that apply to you:

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. (Psalms 11:5)

The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD.... (Proverbs 15:9a)

It is good to remember that if you are not saved at this very moment, God may still be pleased to save you before the time of your death or His return. Talking to one of the thieves crucified with Him, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43).

Q2. But I am not wicked. How can these verses apply to me?

A. Only absolute perfection can be pleasing to God:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

When God **saves** a person He never again will see that person's sins. The saved are "perfect" in His sight. However, an **unsaved** person (we ALL begin unsaved) is very much guilty before God.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; (Isaiah 64:6a)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

Q3. If I am such a wicked person in God's sight,

what will God do to me?

A. The Bible teaches that at the end of the world all the unsaved will come under eternal punishment in a place called Hell.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15)

... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; (2 Thess. 1:7-9)

...the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night.... (Rev. 14:11a)

Q4. That is terrible! Why would God create Hell?

A. Hell is terrible, and it exists because God's perfect justice demands payment for sin. Further, God originally created man to be accountable to Him for his actions.

For the wages of sin is death.... (Romans 6:23a)

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36)

Q5. If I am saved, will I escape hell?

A. You will *never* face God's judgment, if God, in the person of Jesus Christ, became your substitute and bore the punishment of eternal damnation for your sins. Amazing as it may seem, God Himself came to earth as Jesus Christ to bear the wrath of God, the Father, for all His people.

But he was wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him... with his stripes we are healed. (Is. 53:5)

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Q6. If I believe in Jesus Christ, am I saved?

A. Yes – if indeed **God** has **caused** you to believe (that is, have faith) in Him. Faith is the result of salvation, not something anyone can *do* for salvation. Thus, true faith, along with other good works, is seen as a real **fruit** in the lives of those whom God has **already** saved:

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.... (Gal. 5:22)

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ...to believe on him.... (Philippians 1:29)

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.... (Psalm 65:4a)

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27)

Q7. Why does God appear to command us to do good works (like "ask," "seek," "knock"), if there is truly no work that we can do for our salvation?

A. Today, through the Bible, the completed Word of God, God still demands from man perfect obedience as He did with our first parents, Adam and Eve. However, one fundamental purpose of His word, or Law, is to **expose** unsaved man's utter corruption and utter inability to obey the perfect Lawgiver from the heart. Thus, those whom God saves, as they face His Law's absolute demands, come to look to God with thanksgiving. This is because God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, called the second Adam, came to stand between His eternally chosen people and God the Lawgiver and Judge. Jesus did this to satisfy all the demands of God (ask, seek, knock, believe, etc.) perfectly, on His people's behalf. In fact, Christ is the **ONLY ONE** Whose works are acceptable to God as payment for the sins of the people He saves. Man's works, as "filthy rags" (Is. 64:6), are merely offensive to God and have no place in the miracle of salvation:

...*Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet...For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* (Rom. 7:7, 9)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [except Jesus'] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Q8. Can we know how near we are to the end of the world?

A. Yes. God's judgment has already begun on the churches, and is leading to the Last Day judgment, which will take place upon the Lord Jesus' return. **We are in the time of the Great Tribulation right now.** The Bible focuses entirely on the churches of the world as the arena of the great tribulation. It is a time of a famine of the true Gospel of the Bible alone (Amos 8:11, 12), a great increase in "signs and wonders," and the overall "falling away" of the churches (2 Thess. 2:3). Indeed, the "Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5b):

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.... (1 Peter 4:17a)

For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name.... (Jeremiah 25:29a)

*For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be...For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders....* (Matthew 24:21, 24)

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (2 Timothy 3:1)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3, 4)

Q9. How does God judge the churches and why?

A. The churches are judged for their long-standing and repeated rebellion against God's word. In His judgment, God completely gives the churches over to their lusts, using Satan (the Abomination of Desolation) and his false prophets (the "armies," Lk. 21:20), who come with false doctrines and lying signs and wonders (dreams, visions, tongues, falling backwards – 2 Cor. 11:3, 4, 13-15; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 20:7-9). Indeed, Satan, the "son of perdition," is allowed of God entrance *into* and rule *over* the churches:

And it was given unto him [Satan] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: (Revelation 13:7a)

*...the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*** (2 Thess. 2:3c, 4)

Yet another traumatic aspect of the great tribulation is the complete withdrawal of God the Holy Spirit from the churches, just as He departed from the apostate Old Testament assembly:

Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them...so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? (Deuteronomy 31:17)

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he [the Holy Spirit] who now letteth [restrains] will let [restrain], until he [the Holy Spirit] be taken out of the way [midst]. (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

It is important to understand that the beginning of the great tribulation marks the end of the church-era testimony of the "two witnesses," who represent the sending forth of the Gospel:

And when they [the two witnesses] shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. (Revelation 11:7)

However, following a time of silence, the two witnesses stand once again "upon their feet" (v. 11). This indicates that God's great work of saving His elect continues right up to the Last Day, but that this work is altogether *outside* the churches, through individual believers and ministries.

Q10. If the churches are under judgment, what then should I do?

A. As these notable prophecies come to pass, the Bible commands all believers to flee the churches:

*O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of **Jerusalem**...for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.* (Jeremiah 6:1)

*When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the **holy place**...Then let them which be in **Judea** flee into the mountains:* (Matthew 24:15, 16)

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh...For these be the days of vengeance, that all

things which are written may be fulfilled. (Lk. 21:20, 22)
...**Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.** (Rev. 18:4)

In these verses, "Jerusalem," "Judea" and the "holy place" refer to the "great house" (2 Tim. 2:20), the earthly churches of the world. The "her" also points directly to the church as God now exposes her spiritually adulterous nature (Rev. 17:5, 6, 18:22-24). The **invisible, eternal church** - "Jerusalem **which is above**" (Gal. 4:26), that is, the "**heavenly Jerusalem**" (Heb. 12:22) - is the Church that Christ came to build (Mt. 16:18), the Bride "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27), and consists *only* of those whom God has eternally saved, those who will live with Him forever in heaven (Rev. 21). We should, if possible, fellowship with other believers (Heb. 10:25), but no longer *in* or *as* the New Testament church having structure biblically ordained for the church era - elders, deacons, the ceremonial ordinances (water baptism and the Lord's Supper) and membership.

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