

53. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

October 16, 2011

The children of Israel wandered around the desert for 40 years. Even in Biblical times, men wouldn't ask for directions. If Mrs. Moses was in charge, they probably entered into the Promised Land in 7 days flat.

But in our home, it is the opposite. I don't mind asking for directions, my wife Karen doesn't. She is too considerate and polite that we may bother people with our questions.

September last year, Karen and I were in Pittsburgh, PA for a business trip. If any of you are from Pittsburgh, please don't take this as an offense, but that city downtown is total chaos when it comes to finding your way around. I don't think that the city planners had any straight line in their minds when they designed the roads. Just about every single road and street could not go more than a half mile before it starts to veer to left or right. It was extremely confusing for a tourist. Even a couple of Pittsburgh residents told me that they also tend to get lost in that city.

In addition to that, throw in extra detour signs due to many road constructions and an awful lot of one-way signs, you have the perfect ingredients for a complete maze in downtown Pittsburgh.

One thing I found out much later was that the GPS which I was using was obviously a civilian version, not like the GPS our military soldiers have which is a true real-time device. The civilian version has 20 second delay to show people where they truly are.

When you drive 30 miles per hour in downtown where an average city block comes up every 50 yards, 20 second delays can seriously mess up your plan. Before you know it, you have already passed that turn. So you try to go back to that turn area, you have a detour sign and one-way sign that leads to a freeway.

But what if I had a Pittsburgh Police officer who knows the way around that city like the back of his hand in our vehicle, he would tell me which turn to make and we would never be lost.

That is what Jesus is to us – He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. With Him, we would never be lost.

A. DESTINY, LOYALTY, AND REALITY

John 13:36-38 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward." 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake." 38 Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

In these verses we find three things:

1) Destiny questioned – By Jesus' answer, we can tell what Peter really wanted to know was what is going to happen to them.

2) Loyalty declared – With an emphatic tone of voice Peter declared that he would die for Jesus. Just about everyone in this room would say the exact same thing as Peter did. Willing to die for Jesus is very noble, but are we willing to live for Him by following His commands? Would we really be that loyal to Jesus by forsaking the worldly carnal things for the glory of Jesus? When some Christians are questioned about truly living for Him, they say, “I know what I am supposed to do with this, and not do that, but I am not perfect.” We all know that we are not perfect, but hiding behind the disguise of “I-am-not-perfect” excuse is totally lame.

The Lord tells us not to be conformed to the world, but transform ourselves by renewing our minds. Most of the people who use that infamous “I-am-not-perfect” excuse don’t even try to transform.

3) Reality predicted – With the sharp edge of reality, Jesus put His finger on the pulse and make his denials clearly known to Peter.

B. BELIEVE IN ME

John 14:1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

Put yourself in the disciples’ sandals for a few minutes. Your Master and Lord Jesus just told you that He is going to be crucified; He also told that there is a traitor among us; then, Jesus told Peter that he is going to deny Jesus not once, but three times. You talking about a massive confusion and turmoil in the disciples’ hearts. This was too much to handle. Their hearts were like a little sail boat in the middle of a raging sea. But Jesus gently brings in their restless boat to the serene harbor of His promise.

Even though there was good reason why their hearts might be troubled, Jesus tells the disciples to challenge their troubled hearts with faith in the Father and the Son.

Listen, every test of wind that blows to our way can either fill our sails with faith in Jesus or break our mast from the strain of unbelief. It is strictly depending on our choice.

C. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU

John 14:2-3 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. (1) I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, (2) I will come again and receive you to Myself; that (3) where I am, there you may be also.

According to Jesus, heaven is a very real place. It is not a product of religious imagination or the result of a psyched-up mentality. Heaven is the place where God dwells and where Jesus sits today at the right hand of the Father.

If you have KJV or NKJV, you find the word ‘mansions’; but if you have NASB, it uses the word ‘dwelling place’ while NIV and NLT use ‘room’. The Greek word for this is “mone” which means ‘dwelling place.’ Because the Latin Vulgate Bible rendered it ‘mansiones’, KJV and NKJV uses the word ‘mansions.’

The point of Jesus’ comment is not for us to expect a big mansion with many luxurious rooms, a swimming pool and jacuzzi and all the other fancy stuff we don’t have on earth now. Rather, whatever dwelling place God has for us in heaven, it will be as glorious as a mansion. Remember what I told you guys before: Heaven is heaven because Jesus is there; hell is hell because Jesus is NOT there.

I asked you guys to put three numbers in these two verses. They are promises of Jesus for us:

Promise 1) I go to prepare a place for you

Jesus Christ Himself is preparing places for all true believers, and each place will be beautiful. Do you know what one of the greatest parts is? No more mortgage payment or rent!!!

Long ago, I happened to come across a Christian TV program which interviewed a Christian woman who claimed that she temporarily died and went to heaven and saw all the construction of mansions. Of course, she wrote a book like many people did about their after-life experiences. I don't hold a lot of stock on these after-life stories.

I am not saying that they were lying, but I have my reservation about what they claimed because the great apostle Paul said that it was not lawful for a man to utter.

2 Corinthians 12:3-4 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Then, some would argue, "But what about apostle John's Book of Revelation? He wrote down what he saw in heaven." Yes, he did with permission from Jesus.

Promise 2) I will come again and receive you to Myself

This is a clear promise of our Lord Jesus' return for His people. Some will go to heaven through death, but those who are alive when Jesus returns which is known as the 'Rapture' will never see death. They will be changed to be like Christ and will go to heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

You may wonder if we are living in the end of times before the rapture happens. Though we cannot know the date or time of the rapture, I believe that we will know the season:

Matthew 24:32-33 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!

Just look at the world and what is happening. I strongly believe that we are getting awful close to the time of the rapture. Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus, quickly!

Even as Jesus prepares a place for us, He prepares us for that place.

Promise 3) where I am, there you may be also

Jesus wants us to be in heaven with Him.

D. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING

John 14:4-5 And where I go you know, and the way you know." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

You have to give credit to Thomas. I am sure that the rest of the disciples didn't have the foggiest idea what Jesus was talking about, but they were too proud to say, "I dunno." But doubting Thomas didn't have a problem asking a simple honest question to Jesus on behalf of the rest of them and including us.

Don't look at me like you've never done that before while you were attending schools. You were in a class and your teacher asked everyone if you understood what he just explained. You nodded your head vigorously, but you haven't got a clue. However, you were not about to let the rest of the class know that you didn't get it. Then, there was an honest student raised his hand and said, "Please explain it to us again." What a relief! That is what is happening here. Thanks to Thomas.

Let's not pretend to the Lord that we got it. He already knows that we are dense and slow. If you don't understand what you just read from the the Bible, ask the best Bible Teacher in the world, the Holy Spirit. He will be more than happy to explain it to you through the context of the verses you read, a Bible dictionary, a cross reference verse(s), reliable commentaries, pastor or Bible teachers.

E. THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

According to a Newsweek/Beliefnet.com poll from 2005, it shows a shocking number of people who call themselves evangelical and born-again have come to reject John 14:6. The question in the poll read: "Can a good person who isn't of your religious faith go to heaven or attain salvation, or not?"

Of the 1,004 adults 18 years of age and older surveyed, 68 percent of evangelical Christians believe good people of other faiths can also go to heaven. Nationally, 79 percent of all those surveyed said the same thing, with an "astounding" 91 percent agreement among Catholics, notes Beliefnet.com.

Did you notice the article Jesus used? It is 'the', not 'a'. It is an exclusive, not one of many. It means that Jesus is the ONLY way of salvation from God and there is absolutely NO PLAN B.

There's a popular notion, it's been around for some time now, known as 'universalism.' The idea of universalism is that everyone, no matter who they are or what they believe, will eventually be saved.

One of the doctrines of universalism is the 'universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.' Since God is the Father of all humanity, we are all one another's brothers and sisters. That might be lovely for them to think so. But it is completely wrong for any born-again believer to think that. If you believe the Bible is absolutely true, moreover if you just believe the red words of Jesus Christ, you could not agree with 'universalism.'

Some might say to me, "Hey preacher, why do you Christians have to be so narrow-minded?" My answer is, "Because the truth is narrow-minded and there is no way to get around it." And I will NOT speak anything other than the truth from the Bible no matter what.

Speaking of 'narrow-minded', if you believe that everyone in every religion will go to heaven, go to one of those Islam mosques in Detroit, Michigan and declare,

"Judaism and Christianity lead to the same god as Islam." See what happen. But before you go in there, you might consider getting extra life insurances for your surviving family members. The last couple of screaming words you will hear before a long sword flashes toward your neck will be, "Allah," and "Jihad." At least Christianity doesn't lob off your head because you disagree with its doctrines.

Jesus does not simply teach the way or point the way, rather He tells us that HE IS THE WAY, THE ONLY WAY to the Father in heaven, not through religions, not rituals, not good works, not living right without Jesus for that matter.

Like no other religions around the world, the Bible proves itself to be true and accurate in every way. The God of the Bible, Jesus declares that He is the Lord and the only way of salvation. Don't say, "Jesus was a good person, or good teacher, or prophet." If what He claimed is not true, He is none of that, but a liar. Either you have to believe in Him as the Bible says or you have to reject Him. Nothing in between.

The Bible says in Amos 4:12, "*Prepare to meet your God.*" Are you ready? None of us know when death will come knocking on our door. Are your affairs in order? I'm not referring to a will. Rather, I'm asking whether you are prepared for eternity. Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people through Jesus Christ.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. With Him, we would never be lost.
- 2) Even as Jesus prepares a place for us in heaven, He prepares us on earth for that place.