

94. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

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Reverend Oprah Winfrey declared that all religions lead to the same God. She has \$3 billion according to the Forbes Magazine, so she can influence many, many people's minds with her TV programs and magazines. But can she buy her way into the truth of salvation? Let's see what the Lord Jesus says about this from the Bible.

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. I am sure that just about everyone in this sanctuary would say the exact same thing as Peter did.

Let's stop here and let me ask you this question: Would you die for Jesus Christ your Savior? If you are, that's great. But listen, the willingness to die for Jesus is very noble, however, are we willing to live for Him by following His commands from the Bible? Would we really be that loyal to Jesus by forsaking the worldly and 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 transforms 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 made Peter's denials clearly known to him.

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 said that there is a traitor among us; then, Jesus told the biggest mouth among the disciples, Peter that he is going to deny Jesus not once, but three times. You talk about a massive confusion and turmoil in the disciples' hearts. This was too much to handle. Their hearts were like a little sailboat 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 our way can either fill our sails with faith in Jesus or break our mast from the strain of unbelief. It strictly depends 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 at the right hand of the Father today.

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 'mansions', KJV and NKJV uses the same word.

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 far more glorious than an earthly 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 the 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 another great part 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 afterlife experiences. I don't hold a whole 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 the apostle John's Book of Revelation? He wrote down what he saw in heaven." Yes, he did with a 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 according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. They will be changed to be like Christ and will go to heaven. 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 according to Matthew 24:32-33.

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 through the Word of God, the Bible.

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

Jesus wants us to be in heaven with Him. But He leaves the choice to us. Though we all are invited, only a small portion of the world population chooses Jesus as their Savior.

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.

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 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 reads: "Can a good person who isn't a part 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 in v6? 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,' which means that 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 is true, you could not and should not agree with 'universalism.'

Some might say to me, "Hey preacher, why do you Christians have to be so narrow-minded? And you keep this up, you ain't gonna have a big church like Joel Osteen" My answer is, "Because the truth is narrow-minded and there is no way to get around it. The Lord has not called me to have a gigantic church, but to proclaim the truth from the Bible. The Word of God says, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*

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 a good teacher, or a 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.

Let me tell you a true story: Carl McCunn was 35 years old, 6 feet, 2 inches tall, weighing 240 pounds, with curly, reddish blond hair and an outgoing personality. Though he was from Texas and he moved to Alaska, because of his love for the outdoors. In the mid 1970s, McCunn got a job in the TransAlaskan Pipeline, driving truck. He made good money and good friends.

In 1979, He decided that he would spend five months alone and take photos in the wilderness of Alaska. He hired a bush pilot who would fly him to the interior, near a nameless lake in a nameless valley 225 miles northeast of Fairbanks. He spent a year preparing for a journey. Those who were around him remembered how thorough he was in preparation. McCunn checked, double checked his supplies. With about 500 rolls of film, photography equipment, firearms, and 1,400 pounds of provisions, he had planned to stay through mid-August.

In March 1981, a spring day, McCunn flew out over the Brooks Range and was dropped off near the lake where he set up his tent and began his five-month solitary excitement. During the summer time, there is no place in the world like Alaska. The saturated colors from nature scream and boast their beauties in the absolute tranquility and serenity.

However, McCunn had one oversight in his preparation. He forgot to arrange someone to come pick him up before the cold weather of the Alaska Interior started. He didn't realized his oversight until August. He was too remotely separated from any civilization, and it would be suicidal to stay through the Alaskan winter. He was hoping desperately that some of his friends would notice him missing.

With September coming, snow and shorter days came. He wrote this in his diary: "I think I should have used more foresight about arranging my departure." His food and fuel supplies were running very low. With below zero degree weather starting in October, his body fat was starting to be metabolized and couldn't sleep through the nights because of extreme cold temperature. By November, McCunn was completely out of food.

Your reaction to this true story was probably the same as mine. How can anyone make such a colossal mistake? How can someone plan everyday except for the final day? How can someone plan and follow through every detail of one's life except the most important detail of his life? As we think about Carl McCunn's tragedy, we must come to a conclusion that the vast majority of the people around the world do not prepare for their departure from this world – the Final Exit Strategy. It would be a worse tragedy not to prepare our Final Exit Strategy after we hear about the story of Carl McCunn. People prepare for everything – education, marriage, home building, career, and vacation, but only to realize that they have not prepared anything about the eternal life. Like McCunn, many would hope that someone would rescue them somehow.

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. Is your life in order? I'm not referring to having a living will. Rather, I'm asking whether you are spiritually 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 through the Word of God.**