

Are You Ready for the Lord's Return?



Dr. David R. Reagan

**Are You Ready
for
The Lord's Return?**

Dr. David R. Reagan



www.lamblion.com

Dedicated to

Nazir Gill

A Pakistani evangelist — in appreciation of his
50 years of service to the Lord and his
passionate desire for the soon return of Jesus.
Also, in appreciation of his suggestion
of this publication

First edition — January 2016

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Cover painting: Artist unknown

Cover design: Trey Collich

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted,
are from the New American Standard Version,
© 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.

Printed in the United States of America.

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(Note: This publication was taken from the Epilogue of Dr. Reagan's book. ***The Man of Lawlessness.***)

What Then?
(Anonymous)

When the great factories of our nation
Have turned out their last finished works;
When the merchants have sold their last orders
And dismissed every hard working clerk;
When the banks have racked in the last dollar
And paid out the last dividend,
And the Judge of the Earth says, "Closed for the night,"
And asks for the balance — What then?

When the church choir has sung its last anthem;
When the preacher has prayed his last prayer;
When the people have heard their last sermon
And the sound has died out in the air;
When the Bible lies closed on the pulpit
And the pews are all empty of men,
When each one stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened — What then?

When the actors have played the last drama;
When the comic has delivered his last pun;
When the movie has flashed its last picture;
And the billboard has displayed its last run;
When the music halls have turned out their lights,
And the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished,
When the trumpet of the ages has sounded,
And we stand before God — What then?

When the bugle blast sinks into silence
And the long marching columns stand still;
When the captain has shouted the last orders
And they've captured the last fort and hill;
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
And the wounded are brought from the field;
When the survivors who rejected the Savior
Are asked for a reason — What then?

Are You Ready for The Lord's Return?

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
— John 3:36

Are you ready for the Lord's return? If He were to appear in the heavens today for His Church, would you be taken out of this world, or would you be left behind to face the horrors of the Tribulation and the terror of the Antichrist?

Maybe you are thinking, “I probably would go because I was born into a Christian family.” Or maybe your feeling is, “I'm almost positive I would go because I was baptized as a kid, and I've attended church at least once a year since then.” Or perhaps you are one of the majority of people who respond to this question by saying, “Well, I've never been very religious, and I don't go to church, but I'm not a bad person, and I am certainly a lot better than most of the people I know — I mean, I'm not caught up in any serious sins.”

If any of these thoughts are yours, then you need to face up to some grim realities:

- You cannot be saved by being born into a Christian family.
- You cannot be saved by performing certain religious rituals.

- You cannot be saved by performing good works.
- You cannot be saved by avoiding certain major sins.
- You cannot be saved by living better than your neighbor.
- You cannot be saved by joining a church.

Jesus said the only way anyone can be saved is for them to be “born again” (John 3:3). What does that mean? It refers to spiritual rebirth.

The Consequence of Our Sins

Our sins have resulted in our spiritual death. The Bible puts it this way, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). We must be spiritually reborn in order to be reconciled to God and have the hope of everlasting life with Him.

How can you experience that spiritual rebirth? By placing your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. That’s the only way. Jesus Himself defined salvation as a personal relationship with Him when He said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

This vital point makes true Christianity a matter of a relationship, rather than a religion. Religion does not save. Only Jesus saves. Jesus made this crystal clear when He declared, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

A Forgotten Verse

Everyone seems to know John 3:16, but few seem to be aware of John 3:36. John 3:16 says that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of

God abides on him.”

This statement in John 3:36, taken from a sermon by John the Baptist, means that everyone alive this moment is under either the grace of God or the wrath of God — one of the two. God *must* deal with sin if He is truly a loving and just God, and He deals with sin in one of two ways — either grace or wrath.

Again, every person on planet earth is under either the grace or the wrath of God. It is a glorious thing to be under God's grace. It is a terrible and tragic thing to be subject to God's wrath.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, every sin you and I have ever committed and ever will commit was placed upon Him, and He received the wrath of God which you and I deserve. When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you step into the area where the wrath of God has already fallen, and you become immune to that wrath.

There is a contemporary Christian song that powerfully expresses this truth. It says:¹

He paid a debt He did not owe;
I owed a debt I could not pay;
I needed someone to wash my sins away.
And, now, I sing a brand new song,
“Amazing Grace.”
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

Despite the clear teaching of the Bible that we are saved by grace as a free gift of God, and not by works, there is much confusion in the Christian world about salvation. It would seem that Christendom could give a unified answer to the most important question in the world, “What must I do to be saved?” But unfortunately, that is not the case. You are likely to get as many different answers as the number of Christians you ask.

Salvation by Selection

There are two extreme positions. One extreme, which is the Calvinistic interpretation of predestination, takes the position that God has already predetermined who will be saved and who will be lost. This viewpoint sees Man as so depraved that he is incapable of choosing to follow God. He must be selected by God, and God will select whom He pleases.

The advocates of this viewpoint quote scripture passages like Ephesians 1:4-5: "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself."

But whom did God choose? Was it specific individuals? The scriptures do not say that. The so-called proof texts for predestination simply establish the fact that God foreordained that those who put their faith in Him would be saved.

The God revealed in the Bible is not a capricious and arbitrary deity who selects a few for salvation and consigns the majority to Hell. He is the God who loved the whole world so much that He sent His only Son to die for the sins of all Mankind (John 3:16).

Salvation by Works

The other extreme viewpoint is known as "works salvation." It argues that people must earn their salvation by performing certain acts to appease the wrath of God. All cultic groups teach works salvation. That's how the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons are able to motivate their people to do door-to-door solicitation.

But many mainline Christian denominations also put an emphasis on works salvation, especially the more conservative, fundamentalist groups. I grew up in such a group, and although we denied a belief in works salvation, we ended up enslaving our people to it by emphasizing a mechanical "plan

of salvation.”

The essence of salvation, we argued, was a five step plan which many of our preachers referred to as “the five finger exercise.” Counting on their fingers, they would name the five steps: “hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized.”

We definitely came away from such teaching with the conviction that God was obligated to save any person who performed those five steps in the plan. Some often added a sixth step, namely, a life of faithful obedience to the Lord's commands.

Salvation by Grace

The biblical concept of salvation is not to be found in either of these extremes. Salvation is not conferred arbitrarily by God nor can it be earned by performing certain religious acts.²

The Bible approaches the question of salvation by emphasizing that all persons are sinners who are separated from their holy Creator by their sins (Romans 3:9-18).

God's Word then makes it clear that no person can justify himself before God through good works. Isaiah says our righteous deeds are like “filthy rags” before the Lord (Isaiah 64:6). Paul affirms that salvation can never be as a “result of works” (Ephesians 2:9).

What hope then do we have? Very much. God has made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him by providing a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life so that He could die, not for His own sins, but for ours. As He hung upon the Cross, the sins of Mankind were placed upon Him, and He received the wrath that we deserve (2 Corinthians 5:21). The blood of Jesus is our only hope (Romans 5:8-9).

The Key Question

This brings us to the central question: How do we appropriate that blood to our lives so that we can receive forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life?

The Bible's answer is that salvation is a free gift of God's grace which we receive through Jesus by responding to Him in faith (Romans 5:1-2). Here's how Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:8 — "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

God's plan of salvation has always been the same — grace through faith. Before the Cross, the focal point of that faith was God the Father and His promise of a Messiah. Since the Cross, the focal point of saving faith has been God the Son, Jesus the Messiah, who died for our sins.

The Faith that Saves

Notice that in the previous sentence I used the term, "saving faith." That term was carefully selected because the faith that saves is something far more substantial than simple belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. After all, the scriptures say that "even the demons believe and tremble" (James 2:19).

Saving faith produces trust in Jesus as one's Savior (John 3:16-17). The faith that saves also produces obedience to God's Word (1 John 5:3). And true saving faith is always manifested in good works (Ephesians 2:10).

The latter point is a paradox. We are not saved by good works. Rather, we are saved to do good works (Titus 2:14). We don't work to be saved. We work because we are saved. True faith will always be manifested in works, "for faith without works is dead" (James 2:14-26).

The Role of Baptism

Where does baptism fit into the picture? The same place as confession and repentance. Saving faith is always demonstrated in repentance, confession and baptism.

These are not acts we perform to be saved. Instead, they are obedient responses to God in faith. As a person responds to God in saving faith, he will be compelled by the Holy Spirit to repent of his sins, to confess Jesus as Lord, and to manifest his faith through the symbolic act of baptism.

Baptism is a beautiful symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In like manner, it also symbolizes a death, burial and resurrection that has taken place in the life of the believer — his death to the power and consequence of sin, the burial of his old fleshly self, and his resurrection as a new spiritual being in Christ (Romans 6:3-8).

Some people have dismissed baptism as unimportant and therefore optional. This is a very un-biblical attitude. Jesus commanded baptism (Matthew 28:19). The Apostles baptized all their converts and did so immediately after their confession of faith (Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:35-38, Acts 10:43-48, and Acts 16:30-33). Peter characterized baptism as “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (I Peter 3:21).

Baptism is always portrayed as a vital step in the initial conversion process. It is the witness that the conversion process has been completed and the discipleship process is ready to begin.

Some people have seized upon baptism as the essence of salvation, and in doing so, they have converted this beautiful, symbolic act into a work to be performed in order to placate God. They argue that “you meet the blood in the water.” This is known as “water regeneration.”

The baptism that truly saves is not water baptism but the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurs when one puts his or

her faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Paul refers to this baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where he says, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

The Mode of Baptism

The English word, baptism, is a transliteration (not a translation) of the Greek word, *baptizo*. The Greek word means “to immerse.” Thus, “John the Baptist” was really John the Immerser.

Immersion as a symbolic rite of purification was well established among the Jews in the time of Jesus. There were many different occasions for such purifications. A woman would immerse herself after her menstrual cycle. Any person who touched a dead body or anything else considered unclean would immerse themselves. This is the reason that nearly all homes of the wealthy contained one or more mikvas — water pools for ceremonial immersions.

Modern excavations have revealed that there were several very large mikvas located at the southern entrance to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. These were used for ceremonial cleansing before entering the sacred Temple area. And these very pools were probably the ones that Peter and the disciples used on the Day of Pentecost to baptize the 3,000 people who accepted the Gospel (Acts 2:41).

Even scholars from churches that accept other modes of baptism concede that immersion was the only form of baptism practiced by the early church. The alternate techniques of pouring and sprinkling were inventions of men and were never authorized or practiced by the Apostles.

Baptism is a symbol, and symbols are very important. Jesus is called in scripture “the rose of Sharon.” He is not referred to as “the tumbleweed of Texas.” A biblical symbol is symbolic of a truth, and when we change the symbol, we change the truth it stands for. How can the death, burial and

resurrection of the Lord be symbolized in pouring or sprinkling?

The Proper Candidate

Who is a proper candidate for Christian baptism? The first requirement is for the person to hear the Gospel (Romans 10:14). The Gospel is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The person must then respond to the Gospel with the kind of saving faith (Acts 16:31) that is manifested in repentance (Acts 17:30) and confession (Matthew 10:32).

These qualifications clearly exclude infants as candidates for baptism. The Bible does not contain one example of infant baptism. The only baptism that can be found in the New Testament is the immersion of believing people.

Does that mean that children who die in infancy are lost? Of course not. They are not responsible for their sins since they have not yet reached an age of accountability. On one occasion when children were brought to Jesus, He said, "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all" (Mark 10:14-15).

Salvation as a Process

There is an interesting point about salvation that is often overlooked. The salvation we immediately experience at the point of faith in Christ is the salvation of our spirit. The Holy Spirit regenerates our spirit which is dead in sin. The Bible refers to this as justification (Galatians 2:16).

But that is not the end of salvation, and that is the reason that the Bible speaks of salvation as an ongoing process (1 Corinthians 1:18). The salvation of the soul (the mind, emotions and personality) begins at the point of faith, but it continues throughout one's lifetime. This process is called sanctification (Romans 6:18-19).

The change agent, once again, is the Holy Spirit. When a person is born again through the regeneration of his spirit, the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside the person and begins to shape his soul into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29-30, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Galatians 4:19).

Our salvation will not be completed until the resurrection of the righteous. At that time, our bodies will be saved as God miraculously reconstitutes them and then glorifies them, making them immortal and perfect (Romans 8:18-23 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

Thus, our salvation is past, present and future — justification (the spirit), sanctification (the soul), and glorification (the body).

The True Meaning of Salvation

This brings us back to the essence of salvation. I want to emphasize once again that it is a relationship with a Man and not obedience to a plan. We become saved by putting our trust in a person, and we remain saved by continuing to trust in that person.

That person, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth who was God in the flesh (John 1:1-14). That is why Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). It is also the reason that Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

The essence of Christianity is a relationship with a person. You enter that relationship by an act of faith whereby you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

If you have never put your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, I invite you to do so now. Confess to God that you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive you of your sins. And then receive Jesus as your Savior.

Once you have done this, seek out a Bible believing church where Jesus is exalted as the only hope for the world. Go before that church and confess your faith and then manifest that faith in water baptism. Then, seek out a Bible study and prayer group within that church where you can begin to grow in your faith.

Having done this, you will be ready for the return of the Lord, and you can join with me and many other Christians who welcome each day with great hope by exclaiming, "Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus." ✚

References:

- 1) Ellis J. Crum, "He Paid A Debt He Did Not Owe," www.touchjesussongs.net/lyricspage15.html.
- 2) For a detailed discussion of all aspects of salvation, consult the book, *Eternity: Heaven or Hell?* by David R. Reagan (McKinney, TX: Lamb & Lion Ministries, 2010), 195 pages.

About the Author

Dr. David R. Reagan founded Lamb & Lion Ministries in 1980 after spending 20 years as a professor of international law and politics. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Texas in Austin. He earned his graduate degrees from The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy — a school of international studies that is owned and operated jointly by Tufts and Harvard Universities.

Dr. Reagan is a life-long student of the Bible. Since 1980 he has held Bible prophecy seminars all over the United States and around the world. He is the host of a weekly television program called “Christ in Prophecy” that is broadcast over five national Christian networks and a variety of Christian websites. It is also broadcast over satellites around the world. He also edits the ministry’s bi-monthly magazine, *The Lamplighter*.

Dr. Reagan and his wife, Ann, have been married over 55 years. They reside in a suburb of Dallas, Texas. They are the parents of two daughters, and they have 4 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

Lamb & Lion Ministries is a non-denominational ministry dedicated to the teaching of Bible prophecy and the proclamation of the Lord’s soon return. The ministry’s website can be found at www.lamblion.com.

Are you saved and ready for the return of Jesus Christ?

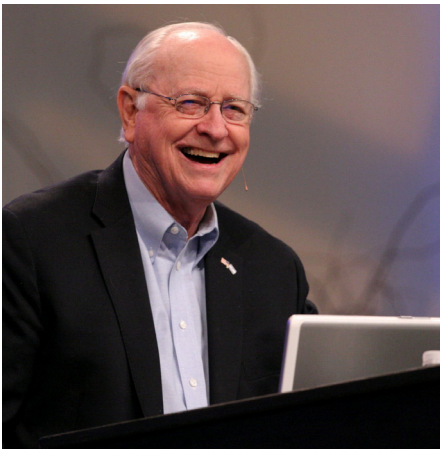
Did you know:

- You cannot be saved by joining a church.
- You cannot be saved by performing good works.
- You cannot be saved by avoiding certain major sins.
- You cannot be saved by living better than your neighbor.
- You cannot be saved by performing certain religious rituals.
- You cannot be saved by being born into a Christian family.

If you are relying on any of these false methods of salvation, then you are not ready for the Lord's return.

So, what must you do in order to be ready for the return of Jesus? That's what this pamphlet is all about.

The author, Dr. David R. Reagan, founded Lamb & Lion Ministries in 1980 after serving for 20 years as a professor of international law and politics. The ministry specializes in teaching the fundamentals of Bible prophecy and proclaiming that we are living in the season of the Lord's return.



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