

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord May Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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What Is A Saint?

Introduction

Sunday, 27th April 2014 was a momentous day in the history of the Roman Catholic church. In St. Peter's Square stood two living popes, Pope Benedict and Pope Francis. It was not the first time that there were two popes alive for in 1378 Urban was elected pope, and six months later on September 20th Clement VII was also elected pope, thus two living popes. However, in 1409 an even stranger thing happened, there were three popes; Pope Alexander V, Pope Benedict XII, and Pope Gregory XII. Therefore, while having two popes alive at the same time was highly unusual, it was not unique. That which really marked that day out as special was the electing of two previous popes to sainthood. Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II became saints. The question arises, "how does one become a saint?" Basically, in Christendom, and Roman Catholicism in particular, it is a beatification which is recognition by the present standing pope. Normally it occurs at least five years after the individual's death, and within that period a miracle has occurred being attributed to the individual. This is the way of man, but in sharp contrast is God's recognition of what constitutes a saint.

What is a Biblical Saint?

Since it is God who describes man as a sinner, only He can declare man a saint. His definition must never be altered to suit the whims of man or determination of a religious body.

- a) The meaning of the word "Saint".
 - i) A saint is not a man dressed in white having been elected by a group of men for a position, but it is a standing an individual is given by God, solely on the grounds of the finished and accepted work of Christ by His propitiatory work on the cross and His resurrection.
 - ii) The word "saint" is the translation of the Greek word "hagios", and if referring to an article it indicates that which is set aside for God. If it is used of a person, it indicates one having the life and character of God and living for His glorification. Sadly, many are called saints but are from it in lifestyle.

How Does One Become a Saint?

The Holy Spirit used the apostle Paul who described "saints" as "them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10). That is a person who, by faith following the example of David and Abraham, believed God and have their sins forgiven and are made righteous. Becoming a saint is the either verbal or inward confession to God of repenting, turning from their sins to the righteousness of God, the acceptance of wholehearted dependence on Christ alone for salvation, He being the only one who could satisfy the rights of God.

An Old Testament Illustration and Christ Contrasted

- 1) Moses and Christ were both men sent by God.
 - a) It is easy for us to view Moses with great respect, but to the ancient Israelites he was possibly an unknown who suddenly walked in from the desert and appears, and informs the people that God had sent him (Ex. 3:13). The natural question would be what are your credentials? (Ex. 3:13). The Lord Jesus came into the world, a man sent from God, and what were some of His credentials? (1 Jn. 4:14).
 - i) Moses showed signs which demonstrated He was sent from God to deliver the people. He did signs that the magicians of Egypt could not do so (Ex. 8:16-12:25). They ultimately acknowledged: “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). Christ did signs which the religious people of Israel could not do (Jn. 2:18; 6:30). The signs He spoke of which none other could do were telling what they would do, and raising Himself from the dead” (Jn. 2:19-22). He offered to them the true bread from Heaven (Jn. 6:31-35).
 - ii) Others were:
 1. Informing John of the miracles He did and more which were foretold of him in the Old Testament (Lk. 7:22).
 2. The fulfillment of every prophecy that had been predicted of Him: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk. 24:27).
 3. The answer to prayer showed he was a man sent from God: “That Thou hearest me always” (Jn. 11:42).
 4. His words declared he was sent from God and the Father (Jn. 14:10).
- 2) Moses, like the Lord, had a message from God which has several parts, and it was the message of truth.
 - a) Part 1
 - i) When Moses entered Egypt his message was simple: “I AM hath sent me” (Ex. 3:14) to bring you up and out of the land of bondage (Ex. 13:3), and bring you to a land your eyes have never seen but he has promised (Ex. 13:5). Christ came and proclaimed that man does not have to wait to a future day to see if he has earned God’s favour, or done sufficiently to obtain salvation. His words are clear: “the axe is laid unto the root of the trees” (Matt. 3:10) and man is “condemned already” (Jn. 3:18). In other words, every individual who is not a saint, who is depending on works to bring them to Heaven, can be assured the “wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn. 3:36). When the Lord said He was the way, by saying “the” way He was in truth saying that He was the only way to God. There is no other way to restoration and forgiveness of sins but by God alone through the sacrifice of Christ. This is a truth every individual must accept before they will ever be a saint before God.
 - b) Part 2
 - i) All the firstborn were under the sentence of death (Ex. 4:23; 11:5). To all who heard, the message was so plain there could be no misunderstanding or confusion. If the firstborn was to live then he had to believe the fact that he, personally, was under the sentence of death. Despite how things looked or others said or thought, no matter what their position in the church, death was about to be executed on him.
 - ii) He was under condemnation, not because of what he did, but by birth. It was not his fault that he was the firstborn nor born in Egypt. This would have been quite disconcerting for because he was under the sentence of death not because of something he had done, it meant that there was nothing he could do to deliver himself.
 - c) Part 3
 - i) He had to believe and act on the fact that there was only one way of being assured of life. The only way to escape the judgment of God and be assured of freedom and life was through the shed blood of a perfect sacrifice provided by God.
 - ii) They had to obey the command of God by not only the shedding of blood and applying it personally, but by entering into the place of safety
 - iii) There had to be 100% dependence on the promise of God, redeemed without works or merit.
 - iv) The acceptance of God’s way of salvation makes one righteous before God, and constitutes such an individual holy, a “saint”.

d) His assurance

- i) That night when the hour of judgment was approaching he could rest in the assurance that God had promised him life, and God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). Thank God becoming a saint by God does not require a period of time or any works, or rituals of man, but is an instantaneous blessing proffered to anyone and everyone who will believe God’s truth, and accept the substitutionary work of Christ as God’s love gift to him or her.

What Are The Characteristics Of A Saint?

The idea of the word “saints” is a group of people set apart for the Lord and His glory. There are three references which refer to the ideal character of saints:

- a) “That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints” (Rom. 16:2)
- b) “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).
- c) “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3)
- d) God describes such persons as:
 - i) Those in whom He is glorified (2 Thess. 1:10)
 - ii) Those who are beloved of God (Rom. 1:7)
 - iii) Those who are sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2)
 - iv) Those who are faithful In Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:1)

When Does A Person Become A Saint?

It has to happen while they are alive on this earth for:

- a) On the reckoning of God an individual becomes a saint when alive. The miracle is not one performed by them but by the grace of God, and the election to that position is by the power of God.
- b) There is no transference of place after death (Lk. 16:26).
- c) The scriptures speak of them as living persons who can be put to death.
 - i) They are people on earth (Rev. 13:7; Acts 9:13; Rom. 15:25-26)
 - ii) People of an earthly locality (Acts 9:13, 32; 2 Cor. 1:1)
 - iii) “Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison” (Acts 26:14)

Conclusion

Salvation and being made a saint before God, is wholly a work of grace without works or personal merit. It is God’s love given to the whosoever so that none need ever die in their sins. It is simply the transference of faith, that is, instead of depending on personal works or religious ritualism to have sins forgiven, an individual transfers their whole dependence on the finished work of Christ at Calvary as sufficient for cleansing from all sin.

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