

THE GREATEST QUESTION EVER ASKED

(Acts 16:25-30)

I. Analyzation of the question.

- a. The word “what” shows that there is something required of the one asking.
 - i. Man is not passive in salvation.
 - ii. Peter told those on Pentecost to “save yourselves from this untoward generation”.
 - iii. Paul said to “work out your own salvation”.
 - iv. If we ask this question, there is an understanding that an individual must do something in order to be saved.
- b. The word “must” is an imperative word.
 - i. There is something that a person has to do.
 - ii. There is no option in this.
 - iii. There is an absolute necessity involved in this.
- c. The word “I” indicates the personal nature of the question.
 - i. There is no doubt that God has a role in our salvation and no one is implying anything different (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - ii. However, man does play a role in his or her salvation.
 - iii. This also indicates the personal nature of salvation.
 - iv. No one can be saved for you.
 - v. This is you and I making the decision for ourselves in matters of salvation.
- d. The word “do” indicates activity on your part.
 - i. Salvation is not passive but active.
 - ii. You never read in scripture where inspiration tells a person he or she has nothing to do to be saved.
- e. The phrase “to be saved” shows the object sought by the one asking.
 - i. Again, there is nothing more important than this.
 - ii. Salvation of one’s soul is of the highest concern.

II. Illustrations of it being asked.

- a. The New Testament is our standard, so to it we must go to find the answer to this great question.
 - i. What we have to do is look at each instance that the question is asked, not necessarily in those exact words, but with words with that idea in mind.
 - ii. By looking at each instance, we will get to see the whole picture of truth on this matter.
 - iii. This question, or one worded similarly, is found four times in the New Testament and one of those is under the Law of Moses.
- b. The first time we see it is when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus (Mark 10:17).

- i. Jesus sent him to the 10 commandments because the Mosaic Law was in force at that time.
 - ii. Remember it was not taken away until the cross (Colossians 2:14), so it was still the duty of the Jews to keep it.
 - iii. Notice the young man's reply (Mark 10:20).
 - iv. Jesus knew the young man had a problem and so, He addressed it (Mark 10:21-22).
 - v. The attitude of the man still exists today.
 - vi. There are those who will only obey some of the commands of God, as long as they are what they want to do.
 - vii. However, this is not the answer one needs to hear today because we are no longer under the Old Law, but under the New covenant.
- c. The second time we see this question asked is in Acts 2, during the events of the Day of Pentecost.
 - i. (Summarize the events leading up to the question).
 - ii. Listen to how Peter, by inspiration, concluded the sermon (Acts 2:36).
 - iii. Then we read the question (Acts 2:37).
 - iv. Peter then, again by inspiration, answers them (Acts 2:38).
 - v. Why were they not told to believe?
 - vi. The answer is, they had been brought to belief by the sermon.
 - vii. They came to understand who Jesus was and the enormity of their sin.
 - viii. Peter told them to be repent and be baptized, putting baptism on the same level of importance as repentance.
- d. Acts 9 is where we have the record of the third illustration of this question being asked.
 - i. We first meet Saul in connection with the stoning of Stephen and then as a persecutor of the church.
 - ii. While Saul was engaged in this persecution, he was so in all good conscience (Acts 23:1; Acts 26:9), which lets us know that our conscience is not a safe guide in religion.
 - iii. In Acts 9, we have the account of Saul meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus.
 - iv. Notice Acts 9:3-5.
 - v. This encounter did not save Saul as some falsely teach.
 - vi. This encounter made Saul ask a question (Acts 9:6).
 - vii. Saul understood that he needed to do something and wanted to know what it was.
 - viii. He didn't lack belief because he came to know exactly who Jesus was on that road.
 - ix. It wasn't repentance, because we then read that he spent three days in fasting and prayer (Acts 9:9-11).

- x. We read in Acts 22:16 what was lacking.
- xi. Salvation brings joy and Saul was miserable until Ananias came to him and baptized him, so we know Saul was not saved on the road.
- e. The last illustration of this question being asked is found in Acts 16.
 - i. Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi because Paul had cast a demon out of a young woman.
 - ii. Listen to Acts 16:25-30.
 - iii. There is our question, word for word.
 - iv. The answer is in verse 31 (Acts 16:31).
 - v. However, the account does not end there (Acts 16:32).
 - vi. Why would they preach to him the word of the Lord?
 - vii. The answer is so that he could believe (Romans 10:17).
 - viii. The result of the teaching they did is recorded in Acts 16:33.

III. The explanation of the various answers.

- a. Why did we read three different answers to those who asked the same question while living under the New Covenant?
- b. If we will take emotion and prejudice out, the answer is not hard to see.
- c. The Philippian jailor did not believe in Jesus.
 - i. This man, if anything religiously, was a pagan.
 - ii. He had likely never heard of Jesus before Paul and Silas entered his jail.
 - iii. He was told to believe because he was not to that point yet.
 - iv. Paul and Silas preached to him in order to produce faith in Christ.
 - v. Once that faith was present, the jailor, and others of his family, were moved to repent and be baptized.
- d. The people of Pentecost were moved to belief in Jesus by the inspired words of the sermon they had just heard.
 - i. They were convinced by the preaching that Jesus was the Christ.
 - ii. They didn't need to be told to believe because they already did.
 - iii. They needed to repent and be baptized, which about 3,000 did.
- e. Saul, when spoken to by Ananias, was a believer who had repented of his sins.
 - i. He was repenting while he was praying and fasting.
 - ii. He needed to be baptized to have his sins washed away.
- f. Each was given a different answer because they each were at different points on the road to salvation.
- g. But the important thing to realize, is that each did the same things and traveled the same spiritual path to salvation.
- h. What if someone asked me how far it is to Birmingham from my house and I told him it was about 50 miles?
 - i. He may travel into Jasper, ask the same question, and get a different answer.

- ii. He may travel on to Dora, ask the same question, and get a different answer than he got the two times before.
 - iii. The answer given would depend on where he was in his travels to Birmingham.
- i. The same is true for one who is traveling the road to salvation.
- j. There is no point telling some to be baptized who had never heard of Jesus.
- k. There is no point in spending time instilling a belief in Jesus as the Son of God who already understand that.
- l. We must take up the plan of salvation with someone where he or she is and go from there.