

HID FROM THE LOST

Jon Macon

God foretold that He would send His Son into the world and mankind would reject him. Isaiah 53:1-3 prophesied, “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*” This indeed came to pass. John 1:10-11 says, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*” As this was happening, Matthew 11:20-27 records how our Lord responded to this rejection: “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*” We can see that it is God’s will to hide His wisdom from those who reject Him.

God’s conditions for salvation from sins

At first glance, it may seem odd to read statements in scripture about God hiding things from people. It is most certainly true that God’s foremost desire is to “have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4), and is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). For this reason, God gave His only Son as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Christ died for us all when we were ungodly sinners in order to save us from eternal wrath (Rom 5:6-9). This is why it is absolutely true that we are saved by God’s grace (Eph 2:5), and that “grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). But there is no such thing as universal salvation. Jesus said “few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). There are God-given *conditions* that man must meet in order to obtain that salvation that is available to all. We must *believe* in Christ, not reject him (John 1:12; 3:16; 8:24; Eph 2:8). To be saved by grace through faith, that faith must be a *living faith*, demonstrated by works of obedience (Gal 5:6; Jas 2:14-26). Jesus Christ “*became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*” (Heb 5:9). Those who do not obey His gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thes 1:7-9). We must

HID FROM THE LOST

(continued)

believe and be baptized into Christ to be saved from our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; Gal 2:26-27). Repentance must also precede our baptism into Christ for the remission of our sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-6; 2 Cor 7:10). And we must be willing to confess our faith in Christ before men in order to be saved (Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10). But what is God's will for those who refuse to obey Him?

God's mystery revealed to the saints, hidden to the lost

As we have previously noted that God desires all men to be saved and has provided that opportunity to all men, we also read in scripture that God gives all men the opportunity to understand the mystery of the New Testament. For example, Romans 16:25-26 says, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations* for the obedience of faith" (see also Eph 3:8-11). But, once again, although all men have the opportunity to understand this mystery, we must meet God's conditions in order to know it. By God's inspiration, the Apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: *but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Verse 14 of the same chapter reminds us that "*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" If we reject these words which the Holy Spirit teaches (verse 13), then the mystery those words contain will remain hidden to us. This is why Colossians 1:26 says this "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" is now made manifest "*to his saints.*" And 2 Corinthians 4:3 says, "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:3-4). When men do not love or believe God's truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, then it is God's will for them to be damned, and He sends them a strong delusion so that they believe a lie (2 Thes 2:10-12). If we are sincerely and properly seeking God, then God promises that we will find (Prov 2:1-6; Matt 7:7-8). Therefore, the fault lies with men when they become blinded and deluded by Satan and the gospel remains hidden to them. God does not act arbitrarily or unfairly at all, but He does work against those who have first rejected Him. It is their fault, not God's. And if they ever turn to the Lord, the veil that is over their hearts will be removed (2 Cor 3:14-16).