

Who Will Be In Heaven?

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INTRODUCTION

An article, written by Eric D. Gayle, entitled, “*No Corners In Heaven*” makes some very important points pertinent to our study today. In it he refers to the fact that at work and in school cliques are often seen. Choices are made for various reasons and one group will not have anything to do with the other. They stay in their own selected corners and would not be caught dead in the corner of another group. While this can be innocent in intent and action, it can also become very harmful, physically and spiritually.

Having ones own corner is often extended in ones mind to the confines of heaven. People think that the heavenly abode is divided into sections, and they will never have to be in the company of those different than themselves. Yet, when Paul, Peter, John and other Bible writers wrote about heaven, they did not mention any corners being there! There will not be a corner for the rich and one for the poor; one for the educated and another for the ignorant; one for the blacks and one for the whites. Neither will there be a corner for the “anti”, one for the “liberal”, and one for the “conservative” church member.

Heaven is described as a place where God will be with His people (Revelation 21:3). Faithful Christians will surround the throne of God and be with Him for eternity — together. This being true, any problems that exist today must be worked out here upon this earth, or heaven will not be your home!

ONLY A FEW WILL ENTER HEAVEN

Before answering the specific question of our subject, concerning “Who Will Be In Heaven,” it will be beneficial for us to recognize that of all who have lived, or will live, only a few will enter heaven. We don’t know the exact number, but everyone can understand the difference in “few” and “many.”

We know this to be true because of what the inspired writers have said. Matthew said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14) (emp - EJ). Peter said, “...when once the

longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:20, 21) (emp - EJ).

Added to these passages, consider: 1) Of all the children of Israel that came out of Egyptian bondage, ONLY Joshua and Caleb, of the original adults went into the promised land. 2) In Luke eight, the parable of the four types of soil, which characterize the four types of hearts, is recorded. Only one of the four remain faithful, and produce fruit.

For you or me to determine whether we will be in heaven or not, we must first determine if we are a part of the few or the many. Based on your life "right now," which group are you a part of?

WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN? ONLY THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH!

No person will ever enter the gates of heaven if he does not love the truth! It must be seen as a treasure that we will seek out, obtain and then guard, at all costs. We must be able to say, as the Psalmist of long ago, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee," and, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:11 & 72). (Crawford, pg. 149). Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, stressed the need to lay up the proper treasures, when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Living the Christian life is not easy. Satan casts many traps before us. This being true, to succeed we must know where to step. Thankfully, we have the truth of God's word which serves as "...a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). In it we have been given, "...all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

Those who recognize the uniqueness of the Bible, and develop a love for the truths found therein, will make every effort to learn its precepts. Having studied for the proper reasons — "...to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) — such a person will obey it initially (God's plan of salvation [Hear, Romans 10:17; Believe, John 3:16; Repent of sins, Luke 13:3; Confess Christ as the Son of God before men, Matthew 10:32; Be baptized for the remission of sins, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38]) and strive to remain faithful to it the rest of his days. He who is successful in this task will be one of the few who will be in heaven, for as John wrote, those who are "faithful unto death" will receive "a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN? ONLY THOSE WHO SEEK IT FIRST!

There are many things we need in this life, and many more that we want. Unfortunately, too often those things become the “focus” of our lives. As a result, our spiritual needs are neglected. We are so involved in making sure we have enough food on the table, clothes to wear and money to pay the bills — some of which were incurred of necessity, but many which were incurred due to recreation and frivolity — that we don’t even think about how we have neglected God and His wishes for us.

You may be thinking, “That doesn’t describe me.” That’s great, if it doesn’t! However, too often the description is real! Please consider, “What do you put first in your life — based upon the time and money spent?” 1) Your job?, 2) Your club?, 3) “Monday Night Football”?, 4) Family and friends?, 4) Fishing?, 5) Hunting?, 6) Your car?, 7) Taking advantage of entertainment opportunities, etc., OR 1) Personal Bible Study?, 2) Worship services?, 3) Being modest?, 4) Being pure and righteous in all you do?, 5) Being the right example to others?, 6) Teaching the lost the saving Gospel of Christ?, 7) Being courageous in standing for the truth in the face of opposition?

Concerning those things that we need, we are promised that we will receive them, if we SEEK FIRST the proper things. What are those things? Matthew, by the inspiration of God, declared,

...if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:30-34).

Matthew is not saying that we are not to put any effort toward the physical things of life, but that they are not the most important things. In contrast, however, they have very little importance when compared to meeting the spiritual needs of the individual. Why? Because in the end, “...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10), but the soul of man lives on forever! This being true, it is vital that those who want to go to heaven recognize the proper priorities and thus put first things first. Jesus stresses the importance of putting the goal of heaven as first in our lives in the parable of the hidden treasure, “...the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matthew 13:44), and the parable of the pearl of great price, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:45, 46). What is first in your life?

WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN? ONLY THOSE WHO ENDURE!

There are many things that must be endured in this life if one is to be faithful to Christ. Temptations are real, and they come often. It takes great effort not to give in to them. Sadly, not all do endure. Some who have been faithful Christians for many years have given in to the allurements of the world, selling their souls and forfeiting the benefits that would have been theirs.

It is the person who endures, and thus sleeps with the Lord, that is promised heaven! Paul made this clear when speaking to the Thessalonians about those faithful Christians still living and those already dead at the return of Christ. He said,

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Who are those who “sleep in Jesus,” but those who endure? The ones spoken of by James, when he said, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12). It is the one who enters the Christian race in initial obedience to the Gospel, keeps himself in proper shape to be successful, and then faithfully runs till he crosses the finish line. Paul spoke of the importance of this to the Corinthians.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Concerning this, John wrote as he had been instructed from heaven, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

CONCLUSION

It takes effort, devotion and commitment for one to be able to enter heaven. Indeed, Jesus said that it takes our all, and he who is not willing to give his all can not even be His disciple, but rather, will be considered worthless and thus cast out. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all

that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 14:33-35).

Are you one of the few who will enter heaven, or one of the many who will not? Do you love the truth? Do you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Seeking those things first, have you obeyed God’s plan of salvation? Having done so, have you endured up to this point? Can you say, as Paul did, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8)? If you can honestly say this, and continue to be able to say it until your last breath, you will enter heaven! If you can’t, you are a part of the “many” who will not enter the pearly gates — and no words of man will be able to change your eternal state after you draw your last breath! What a sad state to be in. If you are in need of change — to make sure you are ready for eternity — please do what is necessary NOW. If you need help, see one of the elders, or other members of this congregation, or any other faithful congregation of the churches of Christ, for assistance.

Works Cited

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