

How To Be Sure of Heaven

Your Eternity

When you die, where will you spend eternity? Notice that I didn't say "if you die", but "when you die". You will spend it somewhere, but where? We live in time, but eternity is forever, and ever, and ever. A simple analogy is that 10,000 years is like a single grain of sand, whereas eternity is like a sandy beach 10,000 miles long, and wide, and deep. The Bible says that once born, we live forever. While we are on earth, we will decide where we will spend eternity. **Why is it then that many of us spend more time on investigating what car to buy than on where we will spend eternity?**

The Truth

In John 17:17, Jesus said in His prayer to his Father "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth". Our Lord repeatedly quoted from the Scriptures. In his threefold temptation, he responded to Satan each time with a quotation from the Old Testament. He spoke of the authority and permanence of the Scripture: "scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). If we believe in Jesus, then we must believe in everything that He said and did. If Jesus lied about anything, then he is a Liar and not Lord. Therefore, since Jesus believed in the Scriptures, the basis for this discussion is nothing more than the Bible itself, the Word of God.

Heaven

Heaven is most simply defined as where God is. It is a place of rest (Heb. 4:9), of glory (2 Cor. 4:17), of holiness (Rev. 21:27), of worship (Rev. 19:1), of fellowship with others (Heb. 12:23), and of being with God (Rev. 21:3). The prayer that our Lord Jesus taught us begins with "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9).

Only One God

You may wonder about other religions and other gods. Again, the Bible makes it clear that "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) and "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). Jesus Christ was extremely precise when He discussed the issue of the salvation of man. He made a statement that some may consider close-minded, but He made no apology for it:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matt. 7:13-14)

You may say: "That's very narrow-minded." However, being broad-minded can be very foolish if what you are broad-minded about is not true. **Truth is narrow and absolute.** Two times two always equals four. The issue is the truth - not what we feel, not what we think, not what seems right, but what God teaches in His Word. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Prov. 14:12). **Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Love Relationship

Heaven is spending eternity with the God of the Bible. In fact, this is why God created mankind in the first place. God is Love (1 John 4:8), and God is Life (John 14:6), and God created mankind so that He could share His Love and Life. God was not lonely because He is self-sufficient, but He created us to have an eternal Love Relationship with Him. God desires that each of us enters into this personal relationship, but He doesn't force us to (like robots). Since true love is only possible when we are free to choose, he allows us to decide whether we want to establish this relationship with Him.

Basic Human Composition

God created mankind with a body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess 5:23). Our body is the physical form and our soul is our inward attitudes (a mind to know Him, emotions to love Him, and a will to choose Him). The human spirit is the part of man that enables him to relate to and know God. It was created to be dependent upon and united with God's Spirit, and was the means through which he enjoyed perfect fellowship with God.

Creation of Man

Unlike all other forms of life that God created, He imparted to man of His own Divine Life (Genesis 2:7). That is, **God's Life (Spirit) was united (infused) with man's human spirit**. Therefore, man was both physically alive (body in union with soul/spirit) and spiritually alive (spirit in union with God). Man bore a full visible expression of the invisible God who lived in them and was dependent upon God for his spiritual life.

The Meaning of the Fall

God wanted His relationship with man to be a love relationship, received and expressed back to Him through the agency of faith. Therefore, man had to be given a free will, because love can only be possible where it is given freely. There had to be a point of decision where Adam and Eve demonstrated that their love of God was truly of their own free will. Therefore they were offered a chance to step out of their dependent relationship with God and to assume **independent status - to be their own gods** (Genesis 3:4-5).

The Result of the Fall

Even though God had said, "for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17), they did not die physically that day. In fact they lived 930 years. However, they did die spiritually that day. God honored their choice to live independently from Himself and withdrew His Life from them, **leaving them spiritually dead**, and on their own. As a result of Adam's choice, every person is born into this world a sinner by nature and spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-3 and 4:18).

Our Problem

Just as Adam and Eve had the opportunity to step out of their dependent love relationship with God, **we have the opportunity to establish one. But now there is a problem**. God is Holy, and Righteous, and Just in nature and those who want to be in His presence must be Holy and Righteous as well (Lev. 11:44). We must be perfect with no presence of sin whatsoever. His holy unalterable nature demands it. Unfortunately, we are born into this world with a genetic disease called sin, and it has contaminated our very nature (Romans 5:12). Therefore, **due to our condition** (sinful nature and spiritually dead), we are destined for a godless eternity.

What About Our Behavior ?

Unlike all other forms of life that God created, He imparted to man of His own Divine Life (Genesis 2:7). That is, God's Life (Spirit) was united (infused) with man's human spirit. Therefore, man was both physically alive (body in union with soul/spirit) and spiritually alive (spirit in union with God). Man bore a full visible expression of the invisible God who lived in them and was dependent upon God for his spiritual life.

Furthermore, there is absolutely nothing that a person can do to change his helpless and hopeless condition by himself (Romans 5:6). You can change your behavior all you want, but you can't change your contaminated sinful nature. In addition, just as a physically dead person cannot restore his physical life, neither can a spiritually dead person give himself spiritual life. **Only God can revitalize our dead spirit by infusing His Spirit. Only God Himself can change our helpless condition.**

More Bad News

Due to our primary problem, our sin nature, we also have a secondary problem - **our ensuing acts of sin**. These sins can be thoughts, words, behaviors, etc., and these personal sins also make us incompatible with a Holy God. **Religion is behavior modification**, but it doesn't change our heart, and it can't change our helpless condition. What about our good works? The bible says that from God's holy perspective "**all our righteous acts are like filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6). What about good people? The bible says that "No one is good--except God alone" (Mark 10:18).

God's Only Provision

Since God is omniscient, He knew that Adam and Eve would sin, and He allowed us to be in the helpless condition that we are in. Why? One reason is that God wanted to demonstrate his incredible love for us (Romans 5:8) by giving us what we needed more than anything, what we don't deserve, and **what we can't obtain on our own**. God wanted it to be a invaluable gift (Ephesians 2:8-9), not something that we could earn.

He would also provide this Gift at great sacrifice to Himself. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). God also wanted to initiate this love relationship ("he first loved us" - John 4:19), and He wanted it to be expressed back to Him through the agency of faith. Finally, and most importantly, God's only provision for our condition is through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Both Halves of the Gospel

There are two primary issues that God had to address in changing our condition: the sin (nature) issue, and the (spiritual) life issue. The Bible says:

"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10)

God's solution to the **sin issue was Christ's death** on the cross, and His solution to the **life issue was Christ's resurrection**. You cannot have one without the other, but neither can you mistake one for the other. The good news of the gospel is not just that Christ came to die for you, but that He came to live in you via the Holy Spirit.

The Finality of the Cross

The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 3:23). This is both physical death and spiritual death (separation from God). As we mentioned before, man had a problem, but only God could solve it. Although God's holiness demanded separation, His love in action provided the solution. God would become man (John 1:14) in Jesus Christ, and as man, Christ paid your sin debt in Full and died your death on the cross. **He would rather die for you than live without you.**

When God placed **all of the sins of all mankind** on the sinless Christ (1 Peter 2:24), Christ experienced for our sake separation from His heavenly Father. The separation was so deep that Christ cried out "My God, my God" (Mark 15:33). Until that point, He had always spoken of God as His Father, but now the closeness was gone because "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21)

It is Finished - Once For All

If one finite man brought sin into the world, surely the infinite God-Man (Christ) could take it away (Romans 5:15). The One who is the source of life certainly can take the place of all of His creation. Therefore, as far as the sin issue is concerned, "**It is Finished**" (John 19:30), as **Christ**

died **Once For All** (Hebrews 10:10). Although God's offer is available to everyone, **this Gift must be accepted on an individual basis**. Otherwise, it is like a paycheck that is never picked up or like a gift certificate that is not redeemed. How can you receive this gift? Only one way, **through faith in Jesus Christ** (Ephesians 2:8).

The Reality of the Resurrection

But Christ's finished work on the cross is only half of the Gospel. Christ's death on the cross was not an end in itself; it was a means to an end: the restoring of spiritual life to men! **Jesus Christ laid down his life for you, so that He could give his life to you, so that He could live His life through you!** The Greek word for physical life is "bios" and is found in only 11 New Testament verses. But the Greek word for spiritual life is "zoe" and is found 124 times in the New Testament.

The Zoe Life

Due to the fall, man is separated from the life [zoe] of God (Eph. 4:18). Christ was zoe in the flesh (1 John 1:2). Jesus said that He was the way, the truth, and the zoe (John 14:6). Christ is the author of life [zoe] (Acts 3:15). Christ laid down his life [zoe] for us so that He could give it to us (John 10:11 and 12:24). **We are made spiritually alive in union with Christ's life [zoe]** (Eph. 2:4, Col. 2:13). Jesus made it very clear:

"I have come that they may have life [zoe], and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

Christ didn't come to "help" us live the Christian life. He came so that He could live (express) His life [zoe] through us (Col 3:4, Gal 2:20). When Christ came to earth and lived as a man, he demonstrated the way that God intended every person to live - a life of faith and total dependency upon His Father. Jesus said "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10).

Salvation

Salvation is **deliverance from eternal death and possession of eternal life**, and eternal life is the life of the eternal one, Jesus Christ. There is a popular myth about Salvation that (1) if a person is good enough, (2) then when he dies, (3) maybe he will get this (4) thing called eternal life. Unfortunately, **this is not at all what the Bible says:**

"And this is the testimony: God **has given** us eternal life [zoe], and this life [zoe] is in his Son. **He who has the Son has life [zoe]**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life [zoe]. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you **have** eternal life [zoe]." (1 John 5:11-13)

Examine The Verses

First of all, **eternal life is a gift** that God gives. Jesus himself said "If you knew the gift of God" (John 4:10). Also see "the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). As we have discussed before, it is not something that you can earn nor be good enough for.

Second, eternal life is not a thing. **Eternal Life is the person of Jesus Christ himself living on the inside of us.** In fact, the biblical definition of a Christian is one in whom Christ lives. "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Third, you don't receive eternal life when you die. **Eternal life starts the moment** that an individual receives Christ as his Savior because it is at that time that Christ begins to live in him (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20).

Finally, eternal life is not a maybe. **You can know for sure that you have eternal life** (1 John 5:13). In fact, God wants you to be sure that you have eternal life. It is not based on your performance, but by trusting in Christ's performance for us at the cross.

What about the Holy Spirit ?

Jesus Christ dwells in us through the person of the Holy Spirit. The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us as believers to live through us the life of Christ. This is why the phrases "Spirit of God lives in you" and "Christ lives in you" are used interchangeably in Romans 8:9-10.

What Does It Mean to Believe in Christ ?

To believe in Christ does not simply mean that you know and agree on facts about him. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder" (James 2:19). Rather, it means to **place your complete trust in the person of Jesus Christ - who He is, what He said, and what He did.** Repentance means to change your mind about something and then to respond appropriately. If you are driving down the street and you realize (believe) that you are going the wrong direction, you turn around and go the other direction (repent).

To believe in Christ means that you agree that He was God in the flesh. You agree in what He said that you can only be saved through Him alone, and that **there is nothing that you can do to save yourself.** "Who then can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:25-26). Finally, you place your complete trust in what He did for you - that He paid your sin debt in full via His death on the cross.

No Incentive to Live a Good Life ?

On the contrary - although this is an understandable misconception that perhaps seems true on the surface. But one vital overwhelming fact is overlooked: when a person establishes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, an internal revolution takes place in that person's life. **God's Spirit infuses his life into the person, and the spiritual core of the person becomes alive.** "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17)

Just like physically dead people don't like to eat food, spiritually dead people are not interested in the things of God. But when God makes us alive, then spiritual realities that before didn't interest us, suddenly become vitally interesting, and we have a greater sensitivity to sin. Because we Love Jesus Christ and recognize what He has done for us by giving His life in love, we find that **we want to do everything that will please Him** and to do nothing that will displease or hurt Him. Jesus said that "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). Love is a much stronger incentive to obey than the fear of the club ever was.

Eternal Rewards

Although our behavior and good works don't have anything to do with being saved, they do have something to do with the life of the saved person. It has been said that good people don't go to Heaven, only saved people do. Of course good people who have been saved go to Heaven where **they are rewarded for what they have done.** "Then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matt. 16:27).

The two criminals who were on separate crosses next to Jesus sure weren't good. Crucifixion was reserved only for the worst criminals (often murderers). In fact, by law a Roman citizen could not even be crucified because it was so cruel. Jesus told the one criminal who believed in Him "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Yes he was saved, but probably with no rewards.

Priorities

Jesus made it quite clear **what our priorities in life should be**. He said "seek first his kingdom" (Matt. 6:33). "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, ... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36).

It's About Time

Time is the key factor. Every person has only the length of a lifetime to restore a personal relationship with God. God knows exactly how many days that He gave you on earth (Ps 139:16) to make a decision that you will have to live with for eternity. He gave some of us short physical lives and some of us long physical lives. **But you don't know how long your life will be**, and relatively speaking all of our lives are short. "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14).

"Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise" (Eph 5:15). The time is now. Now is the time to make a decision because you don't know if there will be another time. Most people who died today didn't think that they were going to do so yesterday. "But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you" (Luke 12:20). **Eternity is not something that you want to bet your life on.**

How You Can be Sure of Heaven

Assurance of Heaven is not based on pride in any way, shape, or form since **our assurance has nothing to do with what we do for God**, but rather with what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Basically, the person who says that he knows he will be in heaven is simply taking God at his word. In fact, it is simply arrogant (and sinful) not to believe God.

In order to spend eternity in Heaven, you must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the way that you can be sure that you will be in heaven depends upon the way that you answer the question "**Have I ever personally, specifically, and definitely entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?**". One of the illustrations that the New Testament uses to describe this relationship is Marriage (Rev. 21:9). Note that You must **know Christ personally, not simply know about him.**

"Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, ... Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, ... (Matt 7:21,23)".

Establishing Your Relationship

The clearest statement in the New Testament on how to establish this relationship with God is John 1:12. The three key verbs in this verse are **Believe, Receive, and Become**. In general, you need to believe in Christ and personally receive Him into your life. But in order to believe in Christ, you need to know something. So to summarize everything that I am trying to communicate, here are the basic steps:

1. Know Something

a. Your Condition

- 1) You have a sinful nature and are spiritually dead
- 2) You are unable to change it by yourself

b. God's Only Provision for your Condition

- 1) Christ's death on the Cross and His Resurrected Life

2. Believe in Someone

a. Place your trust in the Person of Jesus Christ

- 1) Who He is (the God-Man)
- 2) What he said about your condition and God's only provision
- 3) What he did (He died in your place and purified you from all sin)

3. Receive Someone

a. The Resurrected Christ as Your Personal Savior

b. The Resurrected Christ into Your Life

- 1) Making you Spiritually Alive
- 2) Giving you Eternal Life (His Life)

Conclusion

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus tells us how we can receive Him. He compares our lives to a house, and He is knocking at the door. He wants you to open the door and Invite Him in. Simply thinking about getting married doesn't make you married. **It requires total commitment and an act of the will.** Just as getting married means giving up our independence and living in a consultative relationship with our spouse so does receiving Christ. Christ wants a dynamic and eternal relationship with you. He wants you to depend upon and trust Him, and He wants to be involved in every area of your life. **The Lord Jesus Christ is knocking at the door of your life now. Will you let Him in?**