

Heaven-Bound

“An overwhelming majority of Americans continue to believe there is life after death and that heaven and hell exist, according to a new study. What’s more, most think they are heaven-bound.” So begins a recent article in the Nashville Tennessean.

What is heaven? Where is it that so many people believe they are bound? “46% described it as a ‘state of eternal existence in God’s presence,’ and... 30% said heaven is ‘an actual place of rest and reward where souls go after death.’” The understanding that most people have of heaven seems to be fairly much in line with what the Bible tells us is true. What a great place it will be!

How do we get there? What must we do to be heaven-bound? The poll says that “born-again Christians... believe entry into heaven is solely based on confession of sins and faith in Jesus Christ.” While the Bible speaks of being born again (**John 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23**), it also speaks of more that must be done than confession and faith. For us to “*walk in newness of life*” (undergo a new birth), we must also be “*buried with Him through baptism*” (**Romans 6:4**); and Scripture makes it clear that baptism is immersion in water (**Acts 8:36-39**). But this does not mean that our ticket has been punched and is irrevocable. We also must “*be faithful until death*” to receive “*the crown of life*” (**Revelation 2:10**).

Are you heaven-bound? Are you on the path that leads to eternal rest with God? Many who think they are heaven-bound are in for a rude awakening. Many who confess the Lord’s name will be told to depart from Him because they have not done the Father’s will (**Matthew 7:21-23**). But those who are faithful will hear the Lord say, “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*” (**Matt. 25:34**). That’s what I want to hear!

- by Troy Nicholson

You Can Go To Heaven

If the overwhelming desire of your life is not going to Heaven when you die and leave this world, you are living without the grandest hope you can have. Jesus ascended back into Heaven in order to make all things ready for us (Jn. 14:1-6). He is the true and living way, and no one in our generation can come to God except through Christ. If Heaven was an impossible destiny, Jesus would have told us. But we know where Jesus is, and how to get there from here.

Any Christian who doubts whether he can go to Heaven or not has not yet learned what it means to live by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). If a Christian wonders about his eternal destiny it is due to either a lack of faith in God’s promise of eternal life, or to sin in the Christian’s life, of which he is unwilling to repent. There can be no other explanation.

Of course, there is no room for arrogant confidence, either. We have to learn that going to Heaven is a provision of God’s mercy and grace. We could not “earn our way” there. It takes our submissive, obedient faith coupled with the benevolence of a loving Father in Heaven and the sacrificial death of our elder brother to accomplish it. Not one of us has “braggin’ rights.” Remember, it was our fault that Jesus became the sacrifice in the first place.

Since we can go to Heaven, we ought to do more planning for it (Col. 3:1-2). If our hearts are there - truly there - I think we would talk about Heaven more. Our conversations with other fellow pilgrims would focus more on our common journey to the celestial city. We would not be so enamored with earth-life, because we would be “homesick” for Heaven. Abraham felt the pangs of such longings for home, because he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:8-10). Oh that we could have the faith of Abraham!

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand, And cast a wishful eye. To Canaan’s fair and happy land, where my possessions lie. I am bound for the promised land; I am bound for the promised land; O who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.”

- by Mark White

Food, Gimmicks and Recreation

How ashamed we ought to be if we think people are drawn to Christ with food, recreation and entertainment. There’s enough power in the tree of Calvary. Jesus Himself said, “And I, if I am

lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself" (John 12:32). The man who sees his problem will come to Calvary's tree for his remedy. He needs nothing else. He desires only "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

The use of such gimmicks is a direct reflection of lack of faith and trust in the word of God (Romans 1:16). What is the difference in this and in using creeds, robes, incense, instrumental music and other such gimmicks to make the worship "entertaining"? Are we at worship to please ourselves or God?

- by *Jeff May*

"I Disagree"

So, you disagree about something said, or done, or proposed in the local church – no surprise! Disagreements have been noted among Christians dating all the way back to the very first congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1ff). The real issue is this: how are you going to address those disagreements? Let us suggest these necessary things:

First, you must be ready to explain WHY you disagree. It is not enough to simply say "I disagree" without giving good, sound, and logical reasons for your disagreement. You should also be ready to provide an alternate interpretation, plan, method, etc. Unfortunately, there are some who just seem intent upon opposing everything that comes up in the work of a local congregation. There's no real reason for their disagreement – other than the fact that they are just disagreeable people. That sort of objection is unproductive and just plain wrong.

Second, you must determine if the issue is a doctrinal one. God's Word must be consulted, and if it can be shown that something being done, taught, or planned is unscriptural, then it must be opposed with great strength and determination. There can be no compromise of the truth. Paul's approach to such things was this: "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue" (Galatians 2:5). Notice in that quote that there is no room for 'subjection' in regards to doctrinal issues, but that leads to our final point . . .

When there is no matter of truth or righteousness at stake, we SHOULD be ready to submit to the authorized judgment of others. It does not always have to be MY way! I can yield, and I should. We are told to "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5)

Disagreements are nothing new. We can expect them to surface from time to time. But, how are we going to address them? THAT is the question!

- by *Greg Gwin*