

Heaven is a Gift

The first thing to understand about the restoration of our relationship with God is that it is due to the work of God in Christ.

that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, 2 Corinthians 5:19a-b ESV

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 ESV

God, in Christ, has reached out to humanity in order to restore us into a right relationship with Him. And as a result, we can have eternal life with Him in heaven.

At this point, though, it may be that you have some different thoughts about eternal life and/or heaven.

Let’s start with this concept of “eternal life”. Was Jesus talking about heaven? What is “eternal life”?

In the Bible, eternal life refers to a life that comes after our life in this world; a life for eternity with God in a place we generally refer to as “heaven”.

Some, as you probably know, would say that 1) there is no such thing as life after death, or 2) there is no heaven, or 3) reincarnation somehow plays a part in our existence.

Taking these one at a time:

1 – Jesus said there was life after death.

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

John 11:25-26a ESV

2 – In many passages, Jesus spoke of “heaven” as if it was a place with inhabitants.

“Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” Luke 15:7 ESV

Speaking to His disciples, He said it was a place He would share with them.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” John 14:1-3 ESV

3 – Jesus said that you only get one go-round in life.

“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” John 5:28-29 ESV

Speaking to one of the thieves that was crucified along with Him, Jesus implied that there was a future life in a place other than on Earth and that the thief would be there after death.

And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
Luke 23:43 ESV

That there is no such thing as reincarnation is made perfectly clear by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,
Hebrews 9:27 ESV

There is a life after death. There is a “heaven”. There is no reincarnation.

So, the question here is: When you die, are you going to heaven?

God offers you a relationship with Him and a place in heaven as a gift.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23 ESV

It is NOT something you can earn.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV

It is not based on our good deeds. (How many good deeds would you have to do?)

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
Proverbs 14:12 ESV

So, the question again is: When you die, do you think that are you going to heaven?

How would you answer?

If you said “Yes”, what would you base it on? God lets everyone into heaven? (Do you really believe that?) God lets in those who have not committed any really terrible sins? (I wonder what those would be.) God lets in those whose good works outweigh their bad actions? (Again, How many good deeds would you have to do?) God lets in those who tried their best? (In whose eyes?)

People often think that getting to heaven is totally related to their works/deeds/behavior. But the Bible makes clear that a place in heaven comes as a gift. Your works will not get you in.

Our reconciliation with God and our eternal relationship with Him is based in grace – the unearned/undeserved favor that God extends toward us.

Heaven is a gift.

If it's a gift, doesn't everybody or almost everybody get in?

Read on.

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