

Who Will Be In Heaven

Scripture Reading:

John 14:1-3 "LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: YE BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME. IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS: IF *it were* NOT *so*, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. AND IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN, AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, *there* YE MAY BE ALSO."

Jesus has just told his disciples that he would be betrayed and that he would be going to a place where they could not go. In addition he has also just chastised Peter for swearing that he would stay with him through death and telling him that he would deny Christ three time before morning. In order to comfort them he now tells them that he will go and prepare a place for them, that he would come again and that they would be with him in that place. Of course, we know that place as heaven, the house of the living God, the place where He and his Son, Jesus Christ dwell today. It is a wonderful place that we have been assured exists and that there are those who will indeed dwell there.

When His disciples returned from their sojourn under the limited commission Jesus admonished them about their joy:

Luke 10:20 "NOTWITHSTANDING IN THIS REJOICE NOT, THAT THE SPIRITS ARE SUBJECT UNTO YOU; BUT RATHER REJOICE, BECAUSE YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN."

They were rejoicing because of their power over evil spirits, diseases, etc. and Jesus corrects them. Their names being in heaven are more important.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren to encourage them because they were dealing with false teachers saying:

"FOR OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, FROM WHICH WE ALSO EAGERLY WAIT FOR THE SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST," **Philippians 3:20** (NKJV)

The Apostle Peter called it an incorruptible inheritance that will never go away:

I Peter 1:4 "TO AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE, AND UNDEFILED, AND THAT FADETH NOT AWAY, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU,"

And the Apostle John tells us that our names are recorded there and a place reserved for us in God's eternal kingdom:

Revelation 21:27 "AND THERE SHALL IN NO WISE ENTER INTO IT ANY THING THAT DEFILETH, NEITHER *whatsoever* WORKETH ABOMINATION, OR *maketh* A LIE: BUT THEY WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE."

Who Will Be In Heaven

People are confused about who will be going to heaven. If someone dies, no matter what kind of “christian” they were or even if they did not claim to be Christian at all, most people assume that they will some way, somehow, be taken to heaven by a benevolent and loving God. Sometimes even gospel preachers are caught in this trap and will compromise the teaching of the Bible to keep from offending a grieving family and adding to their sorrow. Who will be able to claim citizenship in heaven shouldn't be any mystery to mankind. After all God tells us through his word who will be there. So this is the subject of our lesson this morning. Who will be in heaven?

The Righteous

Matthew 5:10 “BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”

This includes those who may be hated because of their dedication to the ways of God and their stand for the truth of God's word. Because Jesus also tells us:

Matthew 10:22 “AND YE SHALL BE HATED OF ALL *men* FOR MY NAME'S SAKE: BUT HE THAT ENDURETH TO THE END SHALL BE SAVED.”

This includes those who have left homes and families or who have been disowned because they chose Christ over their father's religion or over not having any religion.

Matthew 19:29 “AND EVERY ONE THAT HATH FORSAKEN HOUSES, OR BRETHREN, OR SISTERS, OR FATHER, OR MOTHER, OR WIFE, OR CHILDREN, OR LANDS, FOR MY NAME'S SAKE, SHALL RECEIVE AN HUNDREDFOLD, AND SHALL INHERIT EVERLASTING LIFE.”

This will include more than just those who because of their stand for the Word of God have suffered some persecution, injury or trial but all those who are faithful to God. All who are righteous or right in the sight of God. But who are the righteous? The Apostle writes that it is those:

“THAT YE PUT OFF CONCERNING THE FORMER CONVERSATION THE OLD MAN, WHICH IS CORRUPT ACCORDING TO THE DECEITFUL LUSTS; AND BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND; AND THAT YE PUT ON THE NEW MAN, WHICH AFTER GOD IS CREATED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

The righteous are those that “PUT OFF” “THE FORMER” way of life, “THE OLD MAN” and become a new man. Paul writes again telling how we become this “NEW CREATURE”. First of all we are new creatures because we are in Christ:

Who Will Be In Heaven

II Corinthians 5:17 "THEREFORE IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, *he is* A NEW CREATURE: OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW."

The righteous are new creatures in Christ and how do we get into Christ?

Galatians 3:26-27 "FOR YE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST."

Abel was righteous because he honored and worshipped God as God had commanded him:

Hebrews 11:4 "BY FAITH ABEL OFFERED UNTO GOD A MORE EXCELLENT SACRIFICE THAN CAIN, BY WHICH HE OBTAINED WITNESS THAT HE WAS RIGHTEOUS, GOD TESTIFYING OF HIS GIFTS: AND BY IT HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH."

So the righteous are those who have been baptized into Christ, then who honor, worship and serve Him as he has commanded. Only the righteous will be in heaven.

The Obedient

Matthew 7:21-23 "NOT EVERY ONE THAT SAITH UNTO ME, LORD, LORD, SHALL ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. MANY WILL SAY TO ME IN THAT DAY, LORD, LORD, HAVE WE NOT PROPHESED IN THY NAME? AND IN THY NAME HAVE CAST OUT DEVILS? AND IN THY NAME DONE MANY WONDERFUL WORKS? AND THEN WILL I PROFESS UNTO THEM, I NEVER KNEW YOU: DEPART FROM ME, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY."

There are literally uncountable multitudes of people that are going to stand before God on judgment day, confident that a benevolent Father will overlook their rebellion against His word and accept them into heaven. But will He? No! He will not.

Disobedience to the commandments of God has been a problem for mankind since the beginning of time. Eve was deceived by Satan and enticed to disobey God but Adam was not.

I Timothy 2:14 "AND ADAM WAS NOT DECEIVED, BUT THE WOMAN BEING DECEIVED WAS IN THE TRANSGRESSION."

Who Will Be In Heaven

As a result sin came into the world, mankind was banned from the special garden that God had created for them, we must earn our bread from the sweat of our brow and then die physically.

This same kind of obedience was required under the Mosaic Covenant with Israel:

Deuteronomy 26:16 “THIS DAY THE **LORD** THY GOD HATH COMMANDED THEE TO DO THESE STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS: THOU SHALT THEREFORE KEEP AND DO THEM WITH ALL THINE HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL.”

Saul, the first king of Israel, lost his kingdom, God removed him, because he chose to disobey God’s commandment to completely destroy the enemies of Israel. These enemies plagued Israel for generations and were part of the reason that God eventually destroyed them because of their disobedience. Hear the words of the prophet and judge, Samuel:

I Samuel 15:22 “AND SAMUEL SAID, HATH THE **LORD** AS GREAT DELIGHT IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES, AS IN OBEYING THE VOICE OF THE **LORD**? BEHOLD, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, AND TO HEARKEN THAN THE FAT OF RAMS.”

We can give of our means, attend the worship services of the church, make every sacrifice for what we call the cause of Christ; but if we refuse to obey the commandments of God all this is in vain. Jesus said to scribes and Pharisees, devout Jews:

Matthew 15:8-9 “THIS PEOPLE DRAWETH NIGH UNTO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONoureth me with *their* LIPS; BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN THEY DO WORSHIP ME, TEACHING *for* DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.”

These same words apply to any and every denominational doctrine or practice that exists in the world today. Those congregations of our brethren who have become denominationally minded fall into the same category, and that includes almost all of those in this valley. They worship God in vain. If we worship, walk and fellowship with them we place ourselves in the same condition of abandoning God and his word. (I **John 1:5-6**)

We must be more than teachers and preachers of his word we must be doers of his word:

Who Will Be In Heaven

James 1:21-22 “WHEREFORE LAY APART ALL FILTHINESS AND SUPERFLUITY OF NAUGHTINESS, AND RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS THE ENGRAFTED WORD, WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS. BUT BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES.”

As Jesus says in Matthew 7; people may do great and wonderful works, people may build church buildings and create disciples by the hundreds but if they are not obedient to the will of God in all things their work and worship is in vain. They will hear the voice of God condemning them at the foot of His throne in the judgment. Only the obedient will be in heaven.

The Purified

I Peter 1:2 “ELECT ACCORDING TO THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD THE FATHER, THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT, UNTO OBEDIENCE AND SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST: GRACE UNTO YOU, AND PEACE, BE MULTIPLIED.”

The Apostle is writing to whom? First of all the elect who at judgment day when:

“AND THEN SHALL APPEAR THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN: AND THEN SHALL ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH MOURN, AND THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. AND HE SHALL SEND HIS ANGELS WITH A GREAT SOUND OF A TRUMPET, AND THEY SHALL GATHER TOGETHER HIS ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS, FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN TO THE OTHER.” **Matthew 24:30-31**

And who are the elect? The elect are those who have been sanctified, purified, set aside by God as his chosen people. So how are we sanctified? Jesus prays to His Father.

John 17:17 “SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH: THY WORD IS TRUTH.”

But how does the word sanctify or purify us?

Ephesians 5:25-27 “HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, EVEN AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED THE CHURCH, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT; THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD, THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING; BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.”

Who Will Be In Heaven

We are purified, we are sanctified by being washed in water according to the word of God and in so doing we are made holy and all of the blemishes of sin are removed from our souls. No wonder the preacher Ananias told Saul:

“AND NOW WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED, AND WASH AWAY THY SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.” Acts 22:16

Saul was cleansed of his great sin by being washed in the waters of baptism. By this means Saul was sanctified, purified so that he could become the great Apostle Paul, the one that God chose to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentle people. We are sanctified, we are purified the same way today. Only those who are purified, sanctified, will be in heaven.

The Faithful and Loving

The Christians in the city of Colossae had their hope laid up for them in heaven:

Colossians 1:5 “FOR THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN, WHEREOF YE HEARD BEFORE IN THE WORD OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL;”

So why could Paul write to the church in this great city and assure them that they had a hope of heaven?

Colossians 1:4 “SINCE WE HEARD OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, AND OF THE LOVE *which ye have* TO ALL THE SAINTS;”

It was because of their faith in Christ and their love for those who had been sanctified, become saints, set aside as God’s chosen people.

What kind of faith are we talking about? Many people claim to believe in Jesus Christ and point to his words to His disciples as their assurance of their hope of heaven.

John 3:15 “THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

And again as recorded by the Apostle of Love:

John 5:24 “VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; BUT IS PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.”

And we can see other references in **John 6:40**, **John 11:25** and others.

Who Will Be In Heaven

Is belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God enough to make us acceptable to God as candidates for heaven? Many denominations teach this as part of their doctrine. Many who claim to be members of the church that Jesus built, the church of Christ live as though this is true. They don't love the Lord enough to participate in Bible study or even attend all of the times of worship that are conducted for them. We have to add love to that belief.

What was it that Paul wrote about love in our lives? What did he say about love for God, love for our fellowman, love for the church?

I Corinthians 13:1-3 "THOUGH I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I HAVE BECOME SOUNDING BRASS OR A CLANGING CYMBAL. AND THOUGH I HAVE *the gift of* PROPHECY, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL KNOWLEDGE, AND THOUGH I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO THAT I COULD REMOVE MOUNTAINS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM NOTHING. AND THOUGH I BESTOW ALL MY GOODS TO FEED *the poor*, AND THOUGH I GIVE MY BODY TO BE BURNED, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, IT PROFITS ME NOTHING." (NKJV)

Let us see here first that Paul is talking about someone that has received gifts from the Holy Spirit and has miraculous powers. Wouldn't we think that they would surely love God? To think that someone who has gifts from the Holy Spirit does not love God, the brethren and the souls of their fellowman is beyond our ability to understand. But observe. Paul says that even if I have the capability to speak in languages of men not learned or even that of the angels, if we don't have love we're nothing. Even if we can prophesy, understand things that are hidden from normal men, have God given knowledge, not learned in the normal manner without love I'm nothing. I can give all my possessions to feed the poor, undergo persecution even to the point of death but if I don't have love I'm still nothing. What does our love for God cause us to do?

Even under the Mosaic Covenant we find that if we truly love God then we will keep his commandments. Moses emphasizes this repeatedly in his final sermon to Israel. Observe with me one example:

Deuteronomy 7:8-9 "BUT BECAUSE THE **LORD** LOVED YOU, AND BECAUSE HE WOULD KEEP THE OATH WHICH HE HAD SWORN UNTO YOUR FATHERS, HATH THE **LORD** BROUGHT YOU OUT WITH A MIGHTY HAND, AND REDEEMED YOU OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BOND MEN, FROM THE HAND OF PHARAOH KING OF EGYPT. KNOW THEREFORE THAT THE **LORD** THY GOD, HE IS GOD, THE FAITHFUL GOD, WHICH KEEPETH COVENANT AND MERCY WITH THEM THAT LOVE HIM AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS; "

Who Will Be In Heaven

God's mercy and covenant is to them that love him and keep his commandments. But wait, you say, God's love for mankind is unconditional. Now you are telling us that it is conditional, God only loves us if we do certain things. Reason with me from the scriptures please. God's mercy and compassion for his crowning creation is such that he freely, willingly and because of his love gave the life of His only begotten Son to die a horrible death that you and I might live (**John 3:16**). He did this so that we would all have the opportunity for heaven. But he will grant the joy and privilege of heaven only to those who love him in return. And what does Jesus say about those who love Him?

John 14:15 "IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."

This is simple and straightforward. If you love God you will keep his commandments, if you love Christ you will keep his commandments. Do we need more?

John 14:21 "HE THAT HATH MY COMMANDMENTS, AND KEEPETH THEM, HE IT IS THAT LOVETH ME: AND HE THAT LOVETH ME SHALL BE LOVED OF MY FATHER, AND I WILL LOVE HIM, AND WILL MANIFEST MYSELF TO HIM."

What do the words of God that the Apostle John records later at the direction of the Holy Spirit tell us?

I John 2:3-4 "AND HEREBY WE DO KNOW THAT WE KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. HE THAT SAITH, I KNOW HIM, AND KEEPETH NOT HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM."

And are those commandments so hard and so burdensome that we can't keep them? God tells us this:

I John 5:3 "FOR THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: AND HIS COMMANDMENTS ARE NOT GRIEVOUS."

Those who will be in heaven are those who are faithful and love God, their brethren and their fellowman.

The Baptized and the Determined

In this segment of the lesson we're going to use one example and then close our lesson for this morning. That example is Saul of Tarsus. As we may remember Saul was one who persecuted the church in Jerusalem, even to the point of putting Christians in prison and helping them to be killed because of their determination to honor and worship God as he had commanded them. Saul, as the Apostle Paul, wrote to the church at Philippi these words:

Who Will Be In Heaven

Philippians 3:17 “BRETHREN, BE FOLLOWERS TOGETHER OF ME, AND MARK THEM WHICH WALK SO AS YE HAVE US FOR AN ENSAMPLE.”

Saul, as we should remember, was on the way to Damascus with letters of authority to bind any Christians he found there and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. But Christ had work for him to do and met him on the Damascus Road, struck him blind and sent him into the city to be told there what he MUST do (**Acts 9:6**). He believed on that road that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah promised and confessed that belief to Jesus himself (**Acts 9:4-5**). Saul went, he repented, he prayed and fasted for three days, then God sent a preacher to him to tell him what he MUST do. He said

“AND NOW WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED, AND WASH AWAY THY SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.” **Acts 22:16**

And we know the rest of the story. God appointed Paul as his Apostle to the Gentile people and he spent the rest of his live determined to preach and teach Christ to as many people as he could. He obeyed God’s commandment to wash away his sins and then determined to serve him every day of his life. Consequently then he could write to the Philippian brethren without fear of contradiction that they should “BE FOLLOWERS OF ME”. Paul also said:

“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.” **Philippians 3:14**

Paul said that he pressed toward, was determined to reach “THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD”. What was that “HIGH CALLING”? He tells us:

Philippians 3:20 “FOR OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, FROM WHICH WE ALSO EAGERLY WAIT FOR THE SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,” (NKJV).

Paul was baptized for the removal or remission of his sins. Then he determined to serve God’s purpose to the utmost of his ability and opportunity. He knew that his “CITIZENSHIP” was in heaven. We must likewise be baptized for the remission of sins, live our lives serving God’s purpose for us to the utmost of our ability and opportunity so we can know that our citizenship is also with that of Paul in heaven.

Will You Be In Heaven?

Are you righteous? Are you right with God? Are you an obedient follower of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you love God, Jesus Christ, and your brethren? Are you determined and working toward that wonderful prize that Paul was working toward? If you can answer “yes” to these questions then by the grace of God you will be in heaven.

Who Will Be In Heaven

If you must answer “no” to any of these questions then you will not be in heaven unless you change.

If you are not a child of God, if you have not been added to His church, established your citizenship in heaven then you must:

Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God – **Hebrews 11:6**

Repent of your past sins – **Luke 13:3, 5**

Confess that belief before men as the Ethiopian treasurer did - **Acts 8:37**

Be baptized for the removal of your past sins in order to be saved as the Apostle Peter tells us in **I Peter 3:21**

Or if you have started down that narrow way and wandered off the path, fallen, or need forgiveness for public sin then you need to follow the example given to Simon in **Acts 8:22** and repent and pray God. If you need to come...