How Can We Know for Sure That We'll Go to Heaven?

A Barna poll shows that for every American who believes he or she is going to Hell, there are 120 who believe they're going to Heaven.[4] Yet Christ said otherwise: "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" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Heaven, then, is *not* our default destination. No one goes there automatically. Unless our sin problem is dealt with, the only place we can go is Hell, our true default destination when we die.

In the Bible, Jesus talks more about Hell than anyone else (Matthew 10:28; 13:40-42;

4 K. Connie Kang, "Next Stop, the Pearly Gates . . . or Hell?" *Los Angeles Times* (October 24, 2003).

Mark 9:43-44). He refers to it as a real place and describes it in graphic terms—including raging fires and the worm that doesn't die. Christ says the unsaved "will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12).

Is it possible to know for sure we're going to Heaven? The apostle John said, "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" (1 John 5:13). So we *can* know for sure that we'll go to Heaven when we die.

Do you? If not, please read carefully the last few pages of this booklet. It may be the most important thing you ever read. (What could be more important for you to consider than whether you go to Heaven or to Hell?)

To sin means to fall short of God's holy standards. Sin is what ended Eden's paradise. And all of us, like Adam and Eve, are sinners. You too are a sinner. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

(Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from a relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2). There's a huge gulf between us and God, and there's nothing we can do to cross it. Sin deceives us and makes us think that wrong is right and right is wrong (Proverbs 14:12). It makes us imagine that we're okay when we're really not.

Sin has terrible consequences, but God has provided a solution: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved us so much that he became a man to deliver us from our sin (John 3:16). He came to identify with us in our humanity and our weakness, but he did so without being tainted by our sin (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).

Jesus died on the cross as the only one worthy to pay the penalty for our sins demanded by the holiness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). On the cross, he took upon himself the Hell we deserve, in order to purchase for us the Heaven we don't deserve.

Being God, and therefore all-powerful, Jesus Christ rose from the grave, defeating sin and conquering death (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 54-57).

When Christ died on the cross for us, he said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek word translated "it is finished" was commonly written across certificates of debt when they were canceled. It meant "paid in full." Christ died so that the certificate of debt, consisting of all our sins, could once and for all be marked "paid in full."

Only when our sins are dealt with in Christ can we enter Heaven. We cannot pay our own way. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "Salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Christ's death on the cross, and his resurrection, is the bridge that crosses that chasm which separates us from God. Because of Jesus Christ's atonement for our sins, God

freely offers us forgiveness: "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12).

To be forgiven, we must recognize and repent of our sins: "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Forgiveness is not automatic. It's conditioned upon confession: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Christ offers to everyone the gift of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

There's no righteous deed we can do that will earn us a place in Heaven (Titus 3:5). We come to Christ empty-handed. We can

take no credit for salvation: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved. It's not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ's generous sacrifice on our behalf.

Now is the time to make things right with God. Confess your sinfulness and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on your behalf.

You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person, and Heaven is the place. They are a package—they come together. You cannot get Heaven without Jesus, or Jesus without Heaven.

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). If you do call upon Christ to save you, you'll have all eternity, in the New Heaven and on the New Earth, to be glad that you did.

And I'll look forward to seeing you there!

For Randy Alcorn's 480-page book that explores in detail what the Bible says about Heaven and the New Earth, visit your local bookstore or www.epm.org. You can view the table of contents online, or see the responses of readers, at http://www.epm.org/book-heaven.html.

If you don't have a church home that is Christ-centered and teaches the Bible, and need help finding one, contact the author's ministry at info@epm.org. If we can make some recommendations, we will.

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