

## Why All Christians Go To Heaven

By Randall Watters

Are the 144,000 the only people to go to heaven?

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While Jesus was still with his disciples on earth, He spoke to them about heavenly life:

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (**John 14:1-3**)

Maybe you are saying, "I don't have the desire to go to heaven. I would rather live on a cleansed earth." Did you know that the apostles felt this way as well, at least before Pentecost? The Bible doesn't indicate their desire to be in heaven up until then. Often they did desire the prestige of the kingdom that Jesus spoke about, such as when the mother of James and John asked for them to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in the kingdom (**Matthew 20:21**). But the disciples continually visualized a conventional earthly kingdom of some sort, and felt that it would be realized back then. Luke 19:11 relates:

And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

Even after Jesus' death and resurrection they held onto this idea, and Acts 1:6 says:

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

Only years later do we find the apostle speaking from the heart about their hope in the heavens. Notice the following expressions:

"And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." – **Ephesians 2:6**

The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. **2 Timothy 4:18**

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. **Hebrews 3:1**

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. - **Philippians 3:20**

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel. **Colossians 1:5**

To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. **1 Peter 1:4**

Did God give these disciples of Jesus a supernatural desire to go to heaven rather than to live on earth, as the Watchtower teaches? No such miraculous desire is indicated in the Bible. Rather, their desire was simply based upon wanting to be with Jesus again, wherever He was. **Revelation 14:4** says that "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes." They had come to know and love Jesus dearly, and simply wanted to be with Him. If He was going to heaven, they wanted to be there with Him.

When Stephen was stoned, he knew that he was going to be with the Lord. He saw Him seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven in a vision and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). In John 14:1-3 Jesus likens their going to heaven as "coming home" to be with Him and the Father. In **2 Corinthians 5:6-9** the apostle Paul refers to his "going home to be with the Lord." Simply stated, a true Christian desires to go to heaven because he has been cultivating a loving relationship with Jesus Christ, and he not only wants to be with Him some day, and treasures such a promise, but is appalled at the thought of missing out on such a promise.

Having such a desire is based upon a personal relationship, and not on a preference for physical surroundings, as the Watchtower suggests. For instance: A young man in California falls in love with a beautiful young girl and wants to marry her. Then she moves to New York. Although the young man is quite comfortable in California and does not know what to expect in New York,

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his desire is to be with the one he loves. He doesn't go out of love for New York, for he knows nothing about the place.

So it is with the one who truly belongs to Christ. He does not know anything about heaven or what to expect there, nor does any man. But he knows his Lord, and he wants to be with Him. This is precisely why Jesus promised what He did in John 14:1-3 (quoted earlier). So what if we have no desire to go to heaven? Obviously we have been feeding on the wrong spiritual food. Instead of feeding on the Word of life and the promises given to us by Jesus, we may have been feeding on the doctrines of men who endeavor to steal the promises of God away from us. Galatians 1:6-7 warns us:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. What should we then do? Well, just as a woman should know her head (her husband), so we must also know our head, Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are promised in spiritual marriage to Him. Looking at it that way makes this a very serious matter.

### One Body with One Hope

First of all, we need to clarify why all Christians will one day be together. In John 15, Jesus likens Himself to a vine, with the Father being the cultivator. His disciples were to be the branches, attached to their head, which is Christ. If they reveal themselves as not being true children of God, they are "lopped off." Those who have truly put their faith in Him will be refined and bear fruit. In verses 4-6, Jesus reveals how we must "remain in Him" or "abide in Him."

Paul illustrates this further. **1 Corinthians 12:27** says, "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." Verses 12 and 13 say: "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." Paul is saying that the individual parts of a body are all attached to the head; and the final result is that the body will function smoothly as one. Paul also tells how Christ gave gifts to men in order to build up this "body of Christ":

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. . . we are to grow up in all aspects in Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. **Ephesians 4:11, 12, 15-16.** Verse 4 of the same chapter says: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

So it is very clear that there is actually only one body of Christ, made up of true believers, and they all have only ONE HOPE. What is that hope? It is the final functioning as a perfect "body" in heaven alongside their Lord and Master. To one who has truly become a part of the body of Christ, the thought of being separate from their Lord and their head is frightful indeed. True Christians have a strong desire to be with their Lord in Spirit, and one day in His physical presence. This is not a desire that develops due to spiritual pride or religious fervor, but it develops in the same way as a natural affection between two persons who are in love. How many "bodies" of Christ are there? How many hopes have been set out for Christians? How many callings? Let us not be deceived by the clever trickery of men. Jesus warned in **John 10:7-9**:

Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." How does one know if he is a part of the body of Christ? In John 3:3 Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And in verse 5 He says, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The key would be being "born of the Spirit"--being begotten as one of God's spiritual sons.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to testify about our hope in Christ. The Holy Spirit brings conviction upon our hearts, to personally reveal to us how sinful and wretched we really are without the blood of Christ to cover us. We must come face-to-face with the stark realization that nothing we can do of ourselves can please God; for we cannot justify ourselves before God (Romans 3:20). We deserve death (Romans 6:23). We must personally ask Christ to cover our sins once and for all; and to make us into a new man in union with Him. The Holy Spirit has to bring a conviction on our hearts, and we either follow through or reject this work of the Holy Spirit. As we follow through and ask the Lord Jesus to share His life with us, we are then born of the Spirit. It is all of His work; He has begun it in our hearts with conviction, and is completing it by dwelling in us permanently through the Spirit.

This is not always an emotional experience. God does not often work by "feelings." But we do thereafter begin to notice real changes in us. We are aware of another influence with us--encouraging us on in a right course, and molding us and disciplining us. It is none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus. We feel a new life within us, according to Romans 8:11:

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But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. You are now a son of God according to verse 14: “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” You have the hope of sharing with Him; you are now part of the body of Christ; you are an heir to all of the blessings that He has to give. Verses 16 and 17 says:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. If you are sensitive to it, you will realize that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit now live with you and have made their home within you in Spirit, according to John 14:17-23:

. . . the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

. . . he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.

What would Christians do in heaven? Other than worshiping the Lord (Revelation 15:3-4), the Bible also reveals that we shall reign with Christ as kings and priests (**Revelation 20:6**). Perhaps, as Revelation 5:10 suggests, we will one day reign upon the earth, as the literal Greek renders it. This would also harmonize with Revelation 21:2-3, which after speaking of a new heavens and a new earth, says:

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.” It literally says that God will dwell among His people on the earth. Who is none other than “God manifest in the flesh” but Christ himself? The new earth shall remain forever. The glorified body of Christ will apparently have access to it. The book of Revelation is a book of prophecy that remains to be fully understood, but one thing is for sure: Those who have put their faith and trust in the Lamb's promises and look forward to sharing with Him will abide forever.

### Bible Resources

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