

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE IS NOT GOING TO HEAVEN

There are numerous books and programs featuring individuals who claim to have experienced a journey to heaven and back. Would it surprise you to discover that when a person passes away, they do not go to heaven or hell? This statement may seem unorthodox because it challenges a long-held traditional belief that has been widely accepted as truth, but it is not. It's important to recognize that individuals who make such assertions about visiting heaven (or hell) are not being truthful. Many people are drawn to these narratives because, let's face it, who truly desires to face death and remain in a state of non-existence? This phenomenon is often driven by the desire to profit by catering to people's preferences rather than conveying factual information.

If you carefully examine the scriptures, you will not find any indication of individuals going to heaven to dwell with God eternally after their physical death. There is currently only one exception, which is Jesus, the Messiah, who, having been resurrected from death, now lives an immortal life. However, Jesus is not destined to remain in heaven but will return to Earth to govern in the new kingdom established here.

Prominent figures like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, mentioned in Hebrews 11 and many others, did not ascend to heaven upon their deaths. When we die and are laid to rest, our physical bodies remain in the grave. Everyone who experiences death remains in a state of non-existence until the designated time for their resurrection.

Jesus clearly says: **Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28-29)**

Take note that Jesus does not mention ascending to heaven. Nowhere does it suggest that the individual remains conscious in any form while in the grave. The deceased do not possess any knowledge (Ecclesiastes 9:5). There is no ongoing consciousness among the deceased; their awareness will only be restored at the time of resurrection. Even King David, described as "a man after God's own heart," remains in his resting place to this day. Following Jesus' resurrection, Peter addressed the gathered crowd:

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day... For David is not ascended into the heavens. (Acts 2:29, 34)

The expectation of the righteous lies in the RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD, followed by the gift of eternal life within God's kingdom. It does not revolve around the prospect of "ascending to heaven." Nowhere in scripture does it indicate that heaven is our final destination upon death, despite the perpetuation of this unbiblical notion in hymns, funeral ceremonies, literature, sermons, and Hollywood productions.

God has plans to rejuvenate the Earth and has pledged that the righteous will "**inherit the Earth.**" Jesus reiterated this assurance by stating,

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth" (Psalm 37:9, 11, 22; Matthew 5:5).

This revitalized Earth serves as the reward and legacy for all the devoted individuals.

Excepts (with minor changes) from my book, "Can We Handle the Truth?"