

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

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Did you know that you are in control of what will happen to you after you die? Yes, you will die; but take a deep breath and exhale slowly. You (and only you) control what will happen next. If you have been concerned that where you spend eternity might be dependent on the whim of a god that does not care about you, or one that may be a little capricious, then you can rest easier. Or maybe you have thought what happens to you in eternity depends on past behavior that can't be undone. Or even worse, your eternal destiny depends on the behavior of another. In short, with any of these types of thinking you would not be in control of your destiny. The truth is, the Bible (God's perfect Word) declares you are in control of what happens after you die. You just don't have control over death itself. The purpose of this article is to explain what the Bible says about life after you die and how what you do now sets your eternal destiny.

It is of primary importance to understand that the Bible is true from the very first marking in the first verse of Genesis through the period at the end of the last sentence of Revelation. The Bible does not simply "contain truth," it is the truth. God gave us the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we find the words, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In this passage, the word "inspiration" comes from a Greek word that means "breathed out." Since the word "all" is used with the word "scripture," we understand that not one word or portion is excluded from this statement about it. No part of the Bible is un-inspired or from some other source besides God himself. Therefore, no part of scripture is untrustworthy and what the Bible says is true because it is God that has said it.

The Bible has a lot to say about where you will spend eternity, and the Lord does tell us in his Word that we are in control of what will happen to us in the afterlife. What we do now will determine where we will be then. Many people have a false conception of what the afterlife looks like because they get their information from all the wrong sources; it's "fake news" if you will. Keep in mind, the only truly reliable source of information about that which is on the other side of death is the Lord. As you read this take to heart the scriptures I present and place your preconceptions under their scrutiny. The Word of God is always true.

Throughout the Bible we are shown that the only two places people go after this life are heaven and hell. Heaven is the place where God dwells, and his people will live there in eternal light and glory in the very visible presence of God. Heaven is not a place where you will find darkness, sickness, pain, suffering, or even the smallest speck of evil. Those things will be gone forever. You can read about heaven in Revelation 21 through 22.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

Hell, on the other hand, is a place of eternal suffering and darkness. God will not be there at all, ever. This is where people will go that have chosen in their own hearts to live apart from God. In fact, during this life they reject the only way of salvation which is Jesus Christ.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:8)

Aside from the two choices (heaven or hell) there are no other options in eternity. All the other things you may have heard about like purgatory (Catholicism), lesser heavens (Mormonism), annihilation (Seventh Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses), reincarnation and then ceasing of it (Buddhism) do not exist in God’s Word. So, these ideas are inventions of men that have not yet been past the veil of this life. These notions are therefore falsehoods, designed to try and avoid the future reality of hell and accountability to God, and they should not be considered. Accountability to the only true and living God will be unavoidable.

The idea of reincarnation and also the idea of purgatory (where you make amends for the sins of this life) are both completely tossed out by the following scripture:

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:27-28)

You can also understand from this scripture that only what you do now will affect where you will be after this life, because judgement follows this one life we have on earth. Once you die you will be judged. The only remedy for your sin that has been offered (the payment Jesus made by shedding his blood on the cross) will not continue to be offered.

That brings us to another misconception that some people have about themselves. The misconception is found in the statement, I will not (or may not) have to go to hell because I am a “good person.” And a “good” God would not send a “good person” to hell, would he? Let’s examine this one using the Bible as the primary test. First, let me assure you God is good, period. God is not even subject to our scrutiny in this. God is the perfect standard of goodness and there is nothing in him that is not good. (See Mark 10:18, for example.) You see God is absolutely good; you may consider yourself to be good, but that is subjectively and is a relative comparison. You are measuring your personal goodness based on your own standards or by comparing yourself with other people. For example, you are not an axe murderer like that guy over there, so God will certainly not send you off to hell, right? Wrong, that is a fatal error. Once again, to know the truth we must go back to the Bible.

In Romans we find the truth about ourselves and our standing before God without Christ. See the following:

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:” (Romans 3:10)

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

You are a human being so you are a sinner before a completely righteous God. When you see what the Bible says about yourself you understand first that God is not comparing you to other people. He does not care about that. The question is, have you done wrong or haven't you, based on his standard? You are a sinner.

After this life, if you are still in this unclean condition, as a sinner before God, you must be excluded from heaven. Remember, Revelation 21:8 that we looked at earlier, says that. Furthermore, God has said that the just "payment" for your sin is death.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

"Death" in this context means a death that goes beyond the secession of your physical life on earth. This is that which the Bible refers to in Revelation 21:8 as the "second death" or eternal death (hell). So as an unbelieving sinner that continues to reject God you are on your way to hell. You leave no choices and there is no way to make that look or smell better. It is what it is. However, I did say you have a choice to make in this life that can change where you will spend eternity.

The last part of Romans 6:23 says, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the answer. Not only is Jesus an answer or solution to the problem of afterlife judgment and hell, but according to John, Jesus is the only solution:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

We are also told by John that Jesus came into the world to save anyone who would believe in him.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

The truth is that if you do not know Jesus as your Savior, then according to the Bible you are lost. When you die you will be sent to eternal separation from God in hell. In hell, there are no good things, no happiness, no friends, no anything except remorse. But God sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to save anyone who would believe in him, turn away from sin, and turn to him in faith. These people, the Scripture tells us, "pass from death unto life."

"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." (John 5:24)

Your choice that you have is to believe or to reject the only way of salvation that exists, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And yes, where you will be in eternity rests on your choice. The Bible tells us that faith is equal to righteousness in God's eyes.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference” (Romans 3:22)

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)

As you consider these things, also know that your choice was given to you by the Lord Jesus Christ. If he had not come here and died for all humanity on the cross, and then afterward rose (bodily) from the tomb then you and I would have no way of salvation at all. Even though there is now a choice because of Christ's death on the cross, it is “by grace that we are saved, through faith” alone. We can't do anything to purchase any portion of the gift of salvation. We owe all of our thanksgiving and even our very lives to him because of what he did for us. If there had not been a cross there would not have been a choice and all of this would be moot because there would have been no hope given.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5-7)

Things will change for you if you truly believe in Jesus. You will become a follower of our Savior, and you will want to obey his Word. True faith in Christ will result in sorrow over past sins and repentance from the same. Sin will become something to avoid rather than something to desire. The Holy Spirit will come along side to help you and teach you (John 14:26) and Jesus will come and make his “abode” within you (John 14:23, Galatians 2:20). In all of that you will never be alone but you will have a relationship with God through faith in Christ. But one day, maybe not long from now, you will see face to face the one in whom you have believed. And the things of this earth will dim in the light of His Glory.

Make that decision to follow Christ, won't you? Ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. You will be given the gift of eternal life which he paid for himself.
