



CWR_m

GREG ALBRECHT

“Who’s going to heaven?”

Q Who goes to heaven, where is it and what will it be like?

A We really have no idea about who goes to heaven, or even when and where “heaven” is. The last chapters of Revelation suggest that God will bring his heaven to this earth. What does that mean exactly? Is it literal or symbolic?

The question about “going to” or “getting into” heaven preoccupies people within religious circles when little is known about the afterlife.

What we can know and be assured of from the New Testament is that those who trust and believe in Jesus and who embrace the grace of God will be with God forever.

We often use the term “heaven” in a generic way to speak of the afterlife and I understand this—but there are many potential problems.

One problem concerns the geography or location of heaven. Some believe that heaven is a “place” where God is, as opposed to other places where he is not. But the Bible insists that God can be and in fact is anywhere he wants to be, as opposed to confined to a celestial destination.

Then, within the body of Christ there is the issue of “who” will be allowed into heaven—who will have reservations made in their name? Some denominations seem to feel, if you listen to their rhetoric, that the only ones who will be allowed into heaven are their members. Then the issue of “who” begins to be defined by degrees, from being a little more inclusive to a lot more inclusive.

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says that he has “other sheep” (John 10:16). This statement was addressed to Jews of his day, that Gentiles were his sheep as well. And that no doubt is part of what Jesus meant. But he said “other sheep.” So what of the Jews? And what of faiths other than Christianity?

The human tendency is to reserve “heaven” for those who think like us, go to the same church, synagogue, temple or mosque—and

while the New Testament speaks of Christ-followers being with God forever, it does not do so in an exclusive way. It gives us no indication that God cannot be God—imagine that!

God is who and what he is—and what he is, in his essence, is love.

We have no specific indications about who exactly is “in” and what exactly is required of those who will be “in” heaven. We do know that we’re called to trust and believe in Jesus, and to embrace the grace of God. But no lists are provided so that we might identify those who are “lost,” as much as some Christians seem to desire to identify others as “lost.”

I suggest we leave such matters for God, for whether we leave them to him or not, they belong to him, and they are completely outside of our pay grade to determine. □

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