

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Who's Going to Heaven?

A common prejudicial retort can put us on the defensive. Knowing how to respond properly can move the discussion toward a more profitable outcome.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).



When trying to teach others what the New Testament says about salvation and the church, people will often respond with a question that puts us on the defensive: "So you think you're the only ones going to heaven?" The implication is that we are narrow minded, intolerant, judgmental, and arrogant. How is the best way to respond?

First, we should recognize that this question is meaningful only among those who believe there is a final judgment and a reward/punishment beyond. If the questioner is a committed secularist who denies God, an afterlife, judgment, heaven, hell, or anything beyond the molecules we are made of, then there is no point in carrying the discussion further. If none of those things exist, then there is no objective morality to which we owe our allegiance, and we're all going to rot in the grave, without any distinctions whatsoever. The greater

question we should be discussing is, why should we even bother trying to live a moral life at all? But that's a question for another article.

So let's assume we both believe in an afterlife and a final judgment. Given that shared belief, let's turn this question around: Do you think *everyone* is going to heaven, regardless of what they do or don't do? Child molesters? Rapists? Serial killers? Hitler? White male Republicans? Very few people are so open minded that they recognize *no* limits on human behavior. But once you acknowledge *any* restrictions on who is going to heaven, you're in the same position I am. We may have different perspectives on what the boundaries are and how to determine them, but we both agree that only a subset of the human race is going to heaven.

So the question, "do you think you're the only ones going to heaven" is misleading—even a little dishonest. A better, more appropriate question would be, "Who is going to heaven?"

Fortunately, we do not have to speculate on the answer to that question.

Let's listen to what Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." This is a simple, unambiguous declaration. It is those who do God's will who are going to heaven. It is not narrow-minded, intolerant, or hateful to bring this fact to people's attention.

Of course, in the end God has the last word, and nothing we believe or say will influence His judgment of others. They have to answer for their lives, and we have to answer for ours. Our purpose in pointing out Biblical truth concerning salvation and the church is not to pass judgment on people, but to prompt an honest consideration of what God has revealed, and to encourage compliance. This is fair and reasonable.

A final word of caution: If we present this truth in a disdainful manner that reeks of arrogance, we deserve the scorn we receive. We must be careful to be humble in discussing these topics, knowing that we are still in the process of learning truth ourselves, and will be judged like everyone else.

— David King