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What Does God's Word Say About... Where We Will Spend Eternity

This past week in the news the results of a recent poll taken from Americans indicated that only 70% believe in God. Church attendance has also declined among all age groups in the past 20 years. Yet if one were to go to the obituary section of any newspaper, they would find that approximately 90% of family members would say that their relative who has died is now in heaven and at peace, or in a better place.

There is a remarkable thing that happens at the moment of death. The spirit leaves the body and returns to Him who made us, (Eccl. 12:7). The writer of Hebrews wrote, "And in as much as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment," (Heb. 9:27). Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which ALL who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life [heaven], those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment [hell]," (John 5:28-29). At this point many will say, "Well, I have lived a moral life and my family members have led a moral life, therefore we should see each other in heaven."

The Bible instructs us that eternity with God goes beyond just having good morals. Only from the mind of God [Scripture] do we have the nature and character of life beyond this world revealed. With this revelation from God to man, the knowledge of life beyond the grave can be understood. Luke tells us the story of two men who together shared the experience of death (Luke 16:19-31). This story tells us there is not a second chance to change any actions or decisions we have made in this short life. The rich man never asked to be sent back from his place of torment because he knew that at death his fate was sealed. His life had been filled with unrighteousness and because of this he would remain in torment. Lazarus would remain in the bosom of Abraham, being comforted. Death seals the eternal destiny of each person, both the righteous and the unrighteous, (Eccl. 12:13-14). Individuals will defend their lifestyle when it is called into question by the commandments of God's word. They would rather serve the idols of this world than God (Matt. 6:24). James wrote, "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away," (James 4:14). This life is a vapor compared to eternity. Yet many want to leave God out of their lives and risk eternity separated from Him.

God is not impressed by the numbers who believe in Him (James 2:19) but by those who are obedient to His word (Heb. 5:9). If one is to have eternal life in heaven, God's requirements are: one must first believe Jesus is the Son of God (John 3:16), confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3; Rom. 6:6), and be baptized [buried in water] (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; 1 Peter 3:21;). Then one must continue to be faithful and obedient, (Col. 3:17; James 2:22, 24). These are the requirements for one to have eternal life in heaven, not just good morals.

We will all face God on the day of judgment (2 Cor. 5:10) and at this time our eternal destiny will be determined according to how we applied God's law to our lives in the flesh.

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