

A vertical photograph of a night sky. The Milky Way galaxy is visible as a bright, hazy band of light stretching diagonally from the upper left towards the lower right. The sky is dark blue and black, filled with numerous stars. At the bottom of the image, the dark silhouette of a mountain range or hills is visible against the horizon.

Where will I spend eternity?

Check the items that you believe are necessary for you to spend eternity with God in heaven.

Is it through religious activities or effort, by:

- 1. Keeping the 10 commandments
- 2. Belonging to the right church
- 3. Tithing/giving money to the church
- 4. Water baptism
- 5. Praying on a regular basis

Or perhaps, by:

- 6. Turning from sins
- 7. Committing, or surrendering your life to God
- 8. Inviting Jesus into your heart
- 9. Putting Jesus on the throne of your life
- 10. Making Jesus Lord of your life

Or is it through just being a good person, by:

- 11. Caring for the poor and needy
- 12. Showing kindness to others
- 13. Living a good life
- 14. Doing the best you can
- 15. Making sure your good works outweigh your bad works

If you checked one or more of the items on the list, you failed the test! Don't feel badly though, most people do. (In fact, all of these things can be good things. But they are not what God requires.)

So if religious activities and/or living a good life are not the way to God and eternity with Him, then what is the way? No amount of religious deeds, good works or living a good life can in any way help us earn eternal life. The real answer of how to get to heaven is not based on man-made religions or living a good life. But as we read in the Word of God (the Bible), it's based on a free gift. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Titus 3:5). "For by grace (a gift) are you saved through faith (trusting in Christ); and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9).

It's really very simple. God provides this way to eternity with Him as a free gift through His Son, Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me".

Why is it on the basis of a free gift and through Christ alone? It has to be a free gift because no one could ever meet the requirements. You may be a really good person, but you will probably admit that you are not perfect. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned (are imperfect) and fall short of the glory of God". If God is Holy and perfect (and He is) and heaven is as well, then He cannot allow even the smallest imperfection into heaven. Otherwise heaven would be contaminated and no longer perfect.

If we receive what we truly deserve, it would not be to spend eternity with God in heaven. We read in Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin (imperfections) is death (eternal separation from God), but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". Our imperfection is the problem. But God loves us and wants us in heaven. And He has provided the way for us to spend eternity with Him as a free gift. Jesus did this by paying the price for our imperfections and then offering us God's perfection instead! Since we could never earn it, God provides it as a free gift.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 that Christ died in our place for our sins and rose from

the dead. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says further, "God made Him (Christ) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness (perfection) of God." Jesus was perfect; He had no sin. He did not have to die. But when Jesus chose to die on the cross He took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty we deserve. Now He offers us His perfection as a free gift.

Okay, if all this is true, then what EXACTLY is God asking you to do so that you can have eternal life in heaven with Him? Don't be confused by such items on the front page as #6-10, which can be unclear or suggest some kind of effort on your part. God requires one simple thing: To trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation (the forgiveness of your sins). It's not by trusting in all your religious deeds or your good life. These things cannot get anyone to heaven. It is only by trusting in Christ alone. He paid the price in your place for your imperfections on the cross and then rose from the dead. That payment was sufficient! It's that simple.

And eternal life is eternal! God will never lose you or reject you according to John 6:37-40. Nor can anyone steal you out of the hand of Jesus or

the Father's (John 10:28, 29). But God is a good and perfect Father. He will discipline his children, but never by throwing them out of the family (Hebrews 12:6). Also, eternal life is not something we "think" or "hope" we might have. It is something we can **know** we have right now. 1 John 5:13 says: "I have written these things to you who have trusted in the name of the Son of God (Jesus) so that you may KNOW you have eternal life".

The bottom line is that eternal life is an absolutely free gift. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If this makes sense to you, will you make that decision right now to trust in Jesus Christ alone? Your eternity is at stake.

John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world (that's you) that He gave His One and only son (that's Jesus), that whoever _____ (your name) trusts in Him, should not perish but have eternal life".

