



Four Ways to Miss Heaven
John 8:21-30
GCSP - 06/27/2010

The song Connie just sang (Be Lifted High) speaks of Jesus being lifted up. Based on the Biblical accounts this statement has two primary meanings. The song speaks of the necessity for us to lift Jesus up in regard to how we view Him in our lives, meaning we are to see Him as more important than ourselves.

John the Baptist mentions this when he says in **John 3:30**, "**He must increase, but I must decrease.**" In other words, John was saying it wasn't important how well known he became or whether or not he was successful or wealthy, but that Jesus was known and exalted in the eyes of the people.

This is a very important meaning of the concept of Jesus being lifted high but the second meaning is quite honestly much more important, because apart from this second meaning the first is meaningless. Jesus Himself states this second meaning on three different occasions.

The first is in the passage we read together earlier in the service. **John 3:14** says, "**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.**" The second is in **John 8:28** when Jesus says, "**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He...**" – and we will read this passage more in depth in a moment. The third time Jesus makes mention of this foundational concept is in **John 12:32**, which says, "**And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.**"

This is the aspect of Jesus being lifted up that we will focus on this morning. In the process of studying through this concept we will also discover four ways to miss heaven; four ways you can ensure that when your life on this earth is over you will not see the pearly gates or experience the joy and peace and excitement and thrill of being ever present with God and all those past and present who accepted the free gift of eternal salvation.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **John**.

John 8:21-30

Let's pray.

In this passage of Scripture Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, who were the religious leaders in Israel at the time. Unfortunately, the religious elite of Jesus' day did not believe that Jesus was God's Son, and refused to even consider the possibility. The Rabbis and Pharisees and priests in Israel had spent the last 400 years creating their own religious rituals and rules and traditions to the extent that they didn't even know God any longer, let alone recognize that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah sent to them by God.

For the most part, the entire nation was in the same deluded condition. By the end of Jesus' life on earth, a relatively small number of people were genuine believers; only 120 were gathered at the time of His ascension, after three and a half years of ministry. The overwhelming majority did not believe in Jesus and had no interest in believing; pretty much exactly the way things still are today.

But all the evidence was there and all the evidence is still here today, so Jesus has some stark and blunt words for these religious unbelievers.

v. 21

I want to zero in on the phrase, “...**you will seek Me, and die in your sin.**” What did Jesus mean by that statement?

We read earlier in **John 3:16**, “**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**” This verse and many others in the Bible speak to the fact that eternal forgiveness and salvation is available to any and all who will believe in Jesus. But the startling statement Jesus now makes to the Pharisees teaches us that God’s tremendous offer does not last forever.

Jesus says to the Pharisees and all others who choose to reject Him and choose to not believe in Him, there will come a time when you will seek Him but instead of finding Him you will die in your sin.

This truth is vividly portrayed in the Book of **Romans**. Three times the Apostle Paul says that God gave them over to their sinfulness. In the first instance, because people refused to glorify God as God and were ungrateful to God, **God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity (1:18-24)**. In the second instance, because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped creation instead of the Creator, **God gave them over to degrading passions (1:25-27)**. In the final instance, because they refused to even acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over to a depraved mind (1:28-32)**.

What this means is that after you reject God enough times in the face of all the evidence that has been revealed to you, God abandons you to your own corrupt judgment. God’s patience with unbelievers has a definite limit. God’s offer of forgiveness and eternal life with Him in heaven is not extended to unbelievers forever.

Now the Bible does not tell us how many times you can reject Him or when His limits will be reached, but it is clear there is indeed a point when God will also give you over to a depraved mind that will no longer have the capacity to be redeemed.

So let’s look at the four ways you can miss heaven according to the passage we are looking at in the Gospel of **John**.

1. Self-righteousness

The first guaranteed way to die in your sin and miss heaven is to be self-righteous; to be content with your own ability to please God. Make the horrible mistake of thinking that you are good enough, or pray enough, or go to church enough, or that there is some imaginary scale in heaven that weighs your good deeds against your bad, and you are living in self-righteousness; depending on your own works.

v. 22

What did the Pharisees mean by this question and how does it lend itself to self-righteousness? One of the many false beliefs the Jews had at this time, according to the historian Josephus, was that if you committed suicide you would go to hell – some religions

today still hold to this faulty belief which does not appear in the Bible. So when Jesus says, “...**where I am going, you cannot come**” the reference to considering Jesus was going to kill Himself was one of implying He was going to hell; and since in their minds they were going to heaven this was the only explanation of Jesus going someplace they could not go.

Notice they totally ignore the statement that they would die in their sin, but focus on Jesus going somewhere they could not go. So they mock and ridicule and joke about Jesus committing suicide and thus ending up in the darkest corner of hell.

The Pharisees are so confidently self-righteous they mock the Son of God, the Savior; they mock the idea that they could possibly die in their sin. Self-righteousness is deadly and if you possess it in regards to forgiveness and salvation you will indeed die in your sin.

If I were to ask each one of you if you were a good person, the answer would undoubtedly be yes. All of us think we are good, or at least good in comparison to many others. So answer the following questions in your mind:

- Have you ever told a lie?
- Have you ever stolen anything?
- Have you ever used God’s name or Jesus’ name as a curse word?
- Have you ever looked at someone with lust in your heart?

If you answered yes to even one of these questions you have broken God’s law. If you answered no to any of them, then you probably just lied and broke the first one. And this is just four of the Ten Commandments; if we looked at the other six we would all have to admit that we have broken them as well.

So in light of your positive response to telling lies and stealing, etc, are you innocent or guilty of breaking God’s law? We can all say this together – “Guilty!”

Unfortunately, according to the Bible, God requires absolute perfection for entrance into heaven. So if we are all guilty, do we deserve heaven or hell? Say it together – “Hell!” Nobody is perfect even in the course of a single day, let alone an entire lifetime, and aside from perfection every one of us deserves hell when this life is over.

Do you now see how self-righteousness will cause you to miss heaven? It is the ugliest of deceptions because of the immense consequences that follows.

Proverbs 12:15, says, “**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes**”- and there is no greater fool than the self-righteous fool who cuts him or herself off from God’s forgiveness and salvation by believing he or she can gain it on their own accord.

The Pharisees believed their own works had gained them a place in heaven; their self-righteousness blinded them to the fact that they were going to die in their sin.

So just be certain that you don’t sin; just be certain you don’t need saving; just invent a lifestyle of religion that fits you, or find a church that doesn’t confront sin or teach and preach against it; don’t admit you need a Savior. Trust in your works, trust in your religion, and trust in your rituals and traditions, and I guarantee you will die in your sin like the Pharisees.

Be Worldly

The second guaranteed way to miss heaven is to be worldly.

v. 23

To be worldly means to be preoccupied with the things of this world; it means to live like the world lives, read what the world reads, watch what the world watches, listen to what the world listens to, wear what the world wears, even if all of these things are immoral and indecent.

The Bible teaches us that Satan is currently, and temporarily, the god of this world. So the institutions of this world and the ideology of this world are thus dominated by his thoughts and desires. I dare say the majority of the religions of this world are dominated and somewhat controlled by Satan. God did not create denominations; and no matter how well-meaning men have been that started us down this path of dividing us up between Baptists, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Lutherans, and Pentecostals, and any number of others, it wasn't God's plan. God never intended for His church to be divided and fragmented and split; that's Satan's plan; that's the way of the world.

Think it through for just a moment. Ask any general of any army in this world what the first rule of battle is. The answer you will receive is to divide and conquer. This is exactly what Satan has done in the church. By dividing us into all of these denominations he has greatly weakened us. By and large, the church has become as worldly in our thinking as unbelievers, and that is primarily because each time we break off into another denomination we weaken ourselves. And we slacken up a little with the truth of God's Word; and we allow a little more of the world's philosophies to seep into the church; and before you know it there is no discernable difference between the behavior of the world and the behavior of the church.

God calls His children, those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, to be different, to be separate, to rise up against disobedience, and to destroy every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.

1 John 2:15 tells us **"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."**

So if you want to guarantee that you will miss heaven and die in your sin, just be sure to love the world and join in on all of its philosophies and ideologies, and act according to how the world acts; be sure that if someone accuses you of being a Christian that there is not enough evidence to convict you.

Be Unbelieving

There is a third guaranteed way to miss heaven in this passage.

v. 24

Jesus again tells the Pharisees that they will die in their sins, unless they believe in Him. So what does it mean to believe in Jesus?

Almost on a weekly basis I hear well-meaning people express that being a Christian simply means to believe in God. I got news for you, if that's all it takes then Satan and his demons are Christians because they definitely believe in God and in Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit for

that matter; they have to deal with Him on a daily basis. So what constitutes the kind of belief Jesus speaks of here?

Romans 10:9 sums it up for us: “...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Saving faith, saving belief in Jesus is submitting to the lordship of Jesus; meaning you don't just believe that He died for your sins but that you acknowledge His rightful place as the Lord and Master of your life. Acknowledging Jesus as Lord means your life is not your own for you have been bought with a tremendous price and you now accept the responsibility of living your life according to His Word. A genuine believer in Jesus is one who obeys the Bible. It doesn't mean you will be sinless and it doesn't even mean you will never go through a period of time where you rebel against the principles of God's Word, it simply means you know Jesus is your Lord and not just your Savior and your life reflects that.

Be Willfully Ignorant

There is one final way to guarantee you miss heaven and die in your sin, and that is to be willfully ignorant.

v. 25

This somewhat overlaps with some of what I have already said, but the Pharisees have had all the evidence they need to know beyond any doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. They have seen His miracles, they have heard His words of truth, and they have been convicted of the truth, yet they willfully and ignorantly ask, “**Who are You?**”

They knew who He was but the willfully ignore the truth.

In the next chapter, Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth. The Pharisees, probably some of the same men who are questioning Jesus in chapter 8, ask the former blind man who Jesus is and where He is from. The man mockingly answers, “**Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes**” (9:30).

Why were they willfully ignorant? Going back again to the passage we read together earlier in the service, “**Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil**” (John 3:19).

They loved their sin and we love our sin.

So do you want to die in your sin and miss heaven? Simply be self-righteous, be worldly, be unbelieving, and be willfully ignorant. That's all it takes.

But, if you would rather be forgiven of your sin and be guaranteed a place in heaven, repent, confess your sin and acknowledge Jesus as Lord of your life; trust in Him and accept the sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf by dying on the Cross and rising again three days later.

Let's pray.