

People have various opinions regarding what it takes in order to go to heaven. Most people think that if they live a reasonably good life, then they will make it to heaven. Others think that you must be religious, that you must somehow impress God with a show of your spirituality. Still others think you must perform a lot of good deeds or good works.

These opinions seem to make sense from our human perspective, but the truth of the matter is, these philosophies all fall short of God's one and only requirement for people to enter into heaven's eternal courtyards. If anyone knows exactly what it takes for man to get to heaven, it would be God's Son.

Jesus was once talking to Nicodemus, a leader of the ultra-orthodox religious community known as the Sanhedrin. All these men knew the Law of Moses and did their utmost to obey its many strict commands. But Christ told Nicodemus that such piety was woefully insufficient. There are now new and higher expectations for mankind! Listen to Jesus' heavenly command: "***Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God***" (John 3:3, 5b). Jesus is talking about your great need for a spiritual rebirth from above. This involves two important actions, one on your part and the other on God's part.

First, you must do your part—repent of your sins. Jesus said so! "***I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish***" (Luke 13:5).

The word repent simply means to change your mind. You must change your mind about your sins and your sin nature. People generally minimize their sins, but in reality those sins offend a Holy God. Whether great or small, they separate you from God; and your sin nature, inherited from birth, makes you unlike God. Because good works or religious deeds cannot absolve or do away with your sin, you must change your mind about your need for a Saviour. That's where Jesus Christ comes into the picture. "***John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus***" (Acts 19:4). When Jesus refers to man being born of water, He points to the sinner's need to undergo baptismal waters in a public show that you have recently and truly repented of your sins. The baptism itself does not save you, but what it represents does. Baptism demonstrates that you have trusted in Jesus Christ, not in your good works or your religion, whatever it may be. Infant baptism is not salvation, but rather a false hope, so don't trust in that!

Second, trust God to do His part—give you everlasting life. There is the human side of salvation called faith (trust) and repentance, and then there is the divine side of salvation called grace and mercy.

It is only when these two arms reach out to God's two arms that there can be real and lasting salvation. This is the salvation plan which the risen Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples with: ***"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"*** (Luke 24:47). The apostle Paul naturally followed this salvation plan ***"testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Gentiles, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (Acts 20:21).

The Spirit of God from above will breathe new and eternal life into your soul the very moment that you repent of your sins and call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins. This born-from-above salvation is a one-time experience. The Lord Jesus made a promise to you: ***"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"*** (John 10:11, 27).

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