

"Taking into account the sinfulness of man and both the love and justice of God, how can anyone get into Heaven?"

The word "Gospel" means "good news", and refers to the religious propositions that we develop from analyzing historical facts about the life of Jesus Christ. Christianity is the one religion in the world that is completely based upon history, history meaning the recorded eyewitness accounts of actual events, rather than philosophy, which is simply the chronicling of the thoughts and ideas of men. The tenets of Christianity come from that which Jesus Christ either did or said during His physical life on earth. And if it could be proven that Jesus Christ was not an historical person, or if it could be shown that the events of His life that are recorded in the Bible did not actually happen, then the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be no more relevant to our lives than are the stories of Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy.

The fact is that either Jesus Christ actually died physically, being executed on the Cross of Calvary, was then buried in a sealed tomb and then physically came back to life on that first Easter Sunday morning, or the Bible is just a collection of stories roughly analogous to those of Hans Christian Anderson, the classic writer of fables for children. The Bible explains to us that Jesus Christ did this in order to provide us a way to obtain the approval of God to enter into heaven, as Jesus tells His disciples in **John 14:6**:

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The writings of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament further clarifies this for us, in **Romans 6:23**, which says:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul differentiates between death, meaning eternal existence in hell, which those who do not believe in Jesus Christ will receive as a function of their sinfulness, and eternal life, meaning eternal existence in heaven, which we can receive by the gift of God through Jesus Christ. Paul's proposition that eternal life is a gift means that entrance into heaven is neither earned nor deserved by anyone, and that none of us is good enough to merit entrance into heaven because of our sins. **Ephesians 2:8-9** clarifies this point, as it says:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

The word "saved" denotes being saved from hell, which is the destination of those who have sinned. Paul's proposition is that even people we consider to have been exemplary human beings, such as Mother Theresa and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, are not worthy to merit heaven, which he explains to us in **Romans 3:23**:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The definition of sin is: anything that falls short of God's standard of perfection. A person can sin by thought, word or deed. Since none of us are perfect, all of us are sinful to some degree. Some of us are better than others, but none of us, even the best of us, meets the standard of goodness that God requires.

The fact that all people are sinners and that no one deserves to go to Heaven is the intellectual basis of Christianity. Once we accept that premise, we can move on to the next premise, which is that despite our sinfulness, God loves us. He tells us, in **Jeremiah 31:3**:

3 The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

God tells us that His very nature is to love, and that the basis of the relationship between humanity and God is that God loves us, in **1John 4:8**:

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

This same God that is so totally loving, is also totally just. His possession of both of these traits will not allow our sins to go unpunished, as God tells us in the “b” portion of **Numbers 14:18:**

18 ‘The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.’

God intends to punish all sinners for their sins, as He says, in **Psalm 89:32**

32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes.

Our conclusions thus far are:

1. Entrance into Heaven is a gift from God.
2. No one is eligible to receive this gift, as all men are sinners and the wages of sin is death, meaning, going to hell.
3. God loves us and does not want to send us to Hell, but God is also just, and must punish our sins.

This series of facts brings us to the question: Taking into account sinfulness of man and both the love and justice of God, how can anyone get into Heaven?

The answer to this question is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the unique being that is both God and Man **John 1:1, 14** tells us:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The reason that Jesus Christ, this God-Man, this God in the flesh, came to dwell among us was specifically to die, in order to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed, thus purchasing us a place in heaven, which He offers us as a free gift. Jesus Christ, having lived a perfect and sinless life, chose voluntarily to die on the Cross and descend into Hell, taking the punishment that we deserve for the sins that we have committed. Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross is analogous to someone paying your debt.

Suppose that the bank was about to foreclose on your mortgage, but an anonymous benefactor contacted the bank and paid off your loan. The banker would then contact you, not to put your belongings in the street, but to tell you that the foreclosure has been cancelled and you do not have to make any more payments on your mortgage, because your benefactor wiped out your indebtedness. Jesus Christ is that benefactor, and on the Day of Judgment, when each person’s life is evaluated by God and each person receives their due punishment for their sins, those that have had their sins paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be like that man whose mortgage was paid off, and will not have to stand in the Judgment, but will be able to go immediately into everlasting life, as **Romans 6:23**, tells us:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To have our sins forgiven is a wonderful gift. The question is: How can we receive this gift? Jesus tells His disciples in **John 14:6:**

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The writings of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament further clarifies this for us, in **Romans 10:9:**

9 that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

During the early Christian days in the Roman Empire, although the Romans allowed the various territories that they conquered to continue worshipping the gods in which they believed, the Romans also demanded that the conquered populations worship the Roman Emperor. Now, they did not have to go to the Church of the Emperor, or anything that formal, but, when they pledged their political allegiance to the Roman Empire, they did so by saying, "Caesar is Lord".

The Romans allowed Judaism to continue to exist in the Palestine after they conquered it, but the Jews chose to persecute the members of the new sect of Christianity, and recruited the Romans to persecute them as well. When a person was brought before a Roman court having been accused of being a Christian, they were asked to say that "Caesar is Lord". When faced with this requirement, a true Christian would not say "Caesar is Lord", but rather "Jesus is Lord", and would then be subject to the wrath of the persecution of the Roman Empire. Between 34AD, the year in which Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, and 313AD, the year in which the Roman Emperor Constantine ended the persecution of the Church and became a Christian himself, an estimated 1.8 million Christians were martyred, including all of Jesus' original disciples except John, and almost all of the men that they appointed as leaders in their stead, because of their confession that "Jesus is Lord".

In the first three hundred years of the existence of the Christian Church, 1.8 million people gave their lives for their testimony of Jesus Christ. That is powerful historical evidence for the truth of the Resurrection, as these people were so absolutely convinced in the truth of the Resurrection that they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, not in war, but by being executed. And these people were not sentimental individuals convinced by dreams and reminiscences of Jesus Christ. Listen to the historical record given in **John 20:19-29**:

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

20 When [Jesus] had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

22 And when He had said this, [Jesus] breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord [Jesus]." So [Thomas] said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

26 And after eight days [Jesus'] disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

27 Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 And Thomas answered and said to [Jesus], "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas died preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Cranaganore, India, December 21st, 52AD by Brahmin priests who knocked him to the ground and stuck him through with a lance. Thomas died because he was convinced by his own personal experience with Jesus

Christ, as were many of the 1.8 million others that gave their lives. John tells us, after recording the experience of Thomas, in **John 20:30-31**:

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Many have come to believe in Jesus Christ because of the historical record known as the New Testament, which contains the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that our faith in Jesus Christ's life, death, burial and Resurrection is the means by which we will be saved from sin, death, Hell and the grave, and to enter into Heaven. I invite you to study with us on our Family Life Baptist Church website as we increase our faith in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner, as the Apostle Paul tells us, in **Romans 10:9**:

9 that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

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