

## Do You Think You Are the Only Ones Going to Heaven? Rick Sparks

We don't know how far God's grace will extend on the last day; only that His judgments will be "*true and righteous altogether*" in a perfect balance of justice and grace. Our business is to make all things according to God's New Testament pattern and to love Him by keeping His commandments. He means every word He says on every topic He addresses. We are a breath away from an eternity that can never be changed.

The title question generates strong emotion. It can be asked with such an attitude as to be a "foolish" question, which we are to avoid because they cause strife. What difference does it make what I think? Does my opinion change reality?

However, it is a Bible question. The disciples asked, "*Who then can be saved?*" We should be ready to give an answer about our hope. It is appropriate to discuss, investigate, and reason together concerning matters of the soul. How else can we prove all things and hold fast that which is good?

God wants everybody to be saved. He does not favor any nation, group, gender, or individual. He loves all equally and completely. Jesus died for all to be saved.

Grace is available to all. Heaven has room for all. The Lord knows those who are His. Not a single person who is in a saved condition on the last day will be lost.

As Savior, Christ is the one who declares who, when, and where He saves. Jesus will judge on the last day. The house of God will be judged, as well as those who do not obey the gospel. While we inevitably make judgments, we must not judge unnecessarily, unfairly, or unlovingly.

God's word is the sole soul guide, our blueprint for church building, and the final authority in religion. Scripture is open to all to read, understand, obey, and be saved. Private opinions did not go into it. Private interpretations must not be taken from it. What it says to one, it says to all.

It is possible to draw the circle too small. We must not shut others out of the kingdom. We must not require more than Jesus requires. We must not bind anything the apostles did not. We must not take away others' Christian liberty. In matters of opinion, we must follow after the things which make for peace.

It is possible to draw the circle too big. Salvation is not universal. Many believe all religions are just different roads to the same place. This appeals to a culture where toleration is a chief virtue. It is wrong to believe that a civil right to believe anything makes every belief equally true. Jesus taught us to stay in bounds, not to untie what the apostles tied, and not to think of men above what is written.

There are not a thousand ways to heaven. There are not even two ways to heaven. Jesus is the exclusive route—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Jesus will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, as a shepherd divides sheep from goats, using obedience to His words as the standard. Not all who claim allegiance to Him will make it.

The crucial question is: where does God draw the circle? Whatever His word says is right. Ultimately, nothing else matters, no matter how much we debate it. God's immutable counsel will stand, though the whole earth set themselves against him.

Who does God put in the circle? The body of Christ will be saved. Baptized into Christ, we put on Christ. He is the savior of the body. This shows who the Savior is and where He saves. God placed all spiritual blessings in one location—"in Christ". We are saved by His blood in His body.

Can people obtain salvation in some other place, too? All who were in Noah's ark were saved. All who were out were lost. To be saved, we must enter into Christ.

God puts each person he saves in the same place—the church. He puts no one else in the church. It is impossible for a saved person to be anywhere else. The church is the saved, all the saved, and none but the saved. One cannot be saved outside the church. The church is not the Savior, but it is the saved.

Christ established only one church. There is one body, and but one body. Those in Christ are in His body. Those in His body are in the church.

The Lord's church is not a denomination, nor is it all denominations combined. The Lord's church is divinely assembled. God puts every saved person in it, and it's impossible for a saved person to be anywhere else. The church must conform to God's pattern. It must be a franchise of the original church.

How do we identify Christ's church today? Compare any church to the Bible. Is it organized as the New Testament church was? Does it use a Bible name or description? Does it worship scripturally? Does it accurately teach salvation? Does it follow the scriptural mission?

Who is going to heaven? Those who follow the Bible will make it. Let's all go to heaven together!