

Who Is In Control?

David Halbrook

The weather played havoc with our plans last week for our gospel meeting. The weather often reminds us that we are not in control! Then we must answer “Who is in control?”

Some say “No one is in control” or “We cannot not know who is in control,” despite all of the evidence to the contrary. God’s existence is known by the things that are made (Rom. 1:18-20). If you know that every house has a builder, even if you do not know who the builder is, then you know that *someone* made this world (Heb. 3:4).

Some say “God is in control, but He has to work a miracle on your heart before you can obey Him.” But, faith comes by hearing—being persuaded by words of truth and reason (Rom. 10:17; Acts 26:25). Being humbled and persuaded by the gospel is not miraculous but is the effect of truth.

God is in control and allows us to make choices. All who obey the gospel will suffer but be rewarded. All who do not obey will suffer and be punished (1 Pet. 4:14-17; Mk. 16:16).

God gives us opportunities to know who is in control and decide who we will serve. What’s your choice?

Editor’s Note: Find our article in *Arkansas Weekly* and help others to do the same. We cannot force others to learn, but we can provide them an opportunity.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Samuel Southall, and others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:
David Halbrook 569-4491

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
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How Do I Know If I’m Going to Heaven?

Ken McDaniel

This is likely one of the most common questions asked by Christians. To know that we are going to heaven is an assurance that all genuine believers yearn for--and rightly so. If we miss heaven, certain anguish and destruction await us. It is only natural, therefore, that we have a deep interest in our eternal destinies. But how can we know? What assurances are given?

First, we find assurance in that God desires to give us eternal life (Titus 1:1,2). The extent of this desire is evidenced in the offering of His Son, Jesus. It is made known further in that He seated Him at His right hand to make intercession on our behalf. Moreover, He provides escapes for us each time we are tempted. And, He disciplines us when we sin to turn our hearts back toward righteousness (Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 12:5-11).

Yet, most of us realize that God is not the cause for the doubts which arise concerning our salvation. They arise due to our neglect, carelessness, and disobedience. They also arise because we recognize that we are unworthy.

Though these are very valid reasons to question our salvation, God does not want us to live in doubt. He wants us to know that we are saved and are going to heaven. “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:13). Without this confidence, we can never possess the peace He offers nor eagerly desire Christ’s return (Philippians 4:7; Matthew 11:28-29; Hebrews 9:28).

But this does not mean that we should deceive ourselves into a false hope. If we are walking disorderly, focusing on the things of this world, or in any way neglecting our

salvation, we should have serious doubts about our relationship with the Lord (2 Thessalonians 3:6; James 4:4). But in this lies the answer to overcoming our doubts.

The only thing that can affect our salvation is our unfaithfulness to the Lord. *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39; see also Hebrews 10:23). Only we can separate ourselves from God (see 2 Peter 2:20-22).

To remove our doubts, we must become serious about serving God. We must put His kingdom and righteousness first in our lives (Matthew 6:33). We must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world (Titus 2:11-14; James 1:26-27; 1 Peter 1:13-16). When we fail to do so, we must repent, truly repent, and confess our sins to God. He assures us that He will be faithful and just and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:5-10). With this we can know that we are going to heaven.

Do you question whether or not you will go to heaven? Make sure your sins are forgiven by confessing them and asking for God’s forgiveness. Then devote yourself.

Matthew’s Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Jeff Smith

Matthew’s gospel account begins in a very helpful place, listing the earthly genealogy of Jesus Christ before a description of his miraculous conception and birth. Jesus is initially styled as “the son of David, the son of Abraham,” denoting the royal and covenantal aspects of his messianic lineage. His own name, Jesus, was a fairly common one, identical to Joshua in the Hebrew, but rendered in English from the Greek “Iēsous.” The apparent surname, “Christos,” is actually a messianic designation for the “anointed.” As Matthew wrote, probably in the late 50s to early 60s, Jesus was recognized as the legitimate successor to the authority of revered David and the fulfillment of promise made through Abraham for blessing upon all nations.

Genealogies were very important to the Jews, especially in determining tribal associations, duties, and privileges. While much of this distinction had waned since the days of the exile, the Jewish identity of the Messiah was of great significance. While referencing a continuation of the Old Testament bloodline, Matthew accounts

for Jesus’s legal claim to the throne of David, rather than the Lucan method of establishing his Adamic biological lineage.

Matthew traces the genealogy from Abraham to David, including three notable women in the list – Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. The line becomes royal at the point that Jesse’s son replaces Saul upon Israel’s throne, and proceeds through the giants of Hebrew governance until it rests upon the tragic name of Josiah and the final few rulers of independent Judah. The final section of the genealogy includes exilic and intertestamental characters before arriving at Joseph and Mary. Fourteen generations are noted in each of three sections, but it is apparent Matthew skipped some ancestors for unknown reasons.

With the legalities of Jesus’s messianic claim established, Matthew begins his narrative of the life of his Lord: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.” According to Matthew and ancient custom, Mary and Joseph had been betrothed to marriage, but had not yet consummated the union legally or sexually. During this period, Mary was discovered to be pregnant, but not due to a fault in her virtue. Rather, Mary had been impregnated miraculously by the Holy Spirit, with the intent that she should bear the son of God in a tabernacle of flesh. Unaware of this arrangement, and because of the binding nature of their relationship, Joseph could not simply break up with Mary. Resolved to divorce her privately rather than subject her to stoning, Joseph was contacted in a dream by an angel who testified to Mary’s honor and role in the incarnation.

The baby would be called Jesus, “God saves,” and Immanuel (“God with us”). The virgin would remain chaste until after the birth (Isaiah 7:14).

You Must Stand

Jeff Smith

‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ --Acts 27:24

What God has in store for us might be a trial that will produce even greater glory, but we must persevere in this present hardship to get there. It is not up to us to declare when we have had enough, or to bow to adversity and take an easier way out. Job had to scratch and wonder, Jesus had to carry the cross before it carried him, and Paul had to survive the storm to reach the courtroom. We must likewise endure.