

FAITH CHAT

with James & John

Do We Put People In Heaven Too Soon?

Know This...

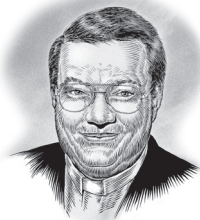
The Bible is very clear: "Nothing unclean will enter heaven." ^{Rev 21:27} Yet, out of love for family and friends, or out of belief in salvation by "faith alone," or out of a lack of understanding of the balance of God's infinite love, endless mercy, and perfect justice, too many Christians effectively "put people in heaven" before God does. God does love all of us equally—the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the believer and the non-believer—but unless we die in a perfect state of grace, we will not immediately enter heaven.



John: When someone we love dies, believing that they immediately entered heaven may bring us peace of mind; but it does nothing for the one who has died.

James: For the first 1500 years of the Church, all Christians were taught that how they lived their lives mattered and affected their life after death.

John: Jesus does not teach that the saved go immediately to heaven when they die. Rather, we must first make reparation for sin, either in this life or the next.



James: Jews for 4,000 years and Christians for 2,000 have prayed for the repose of the souls of the dead.

John: Scripture and Tradition teach that God accepts and applies our prayers and charitable deeds to the debt owed by the poor souls in purgatory.

James: Let us pray for the dead and offer our good works for them. Let us not assume that they are already in heaven; instead, let us find peace in helping them on the way.

Deacon John Beckmann and Deacon James Russell are permanent deacons in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

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Jesus ends the parable of the unforgiving servant, saying, "His master summoned him and said, 'Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt." ^{Mt 18:33-34} Jesus warns us, "If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny." ^{Lk 12:58-59} Jesus says, "Whoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." ^{Mt 12:32}

PAPA SAYS

"Each one will be presented to the Judge exactly as he was when he departed this life. Yet, there must be a cleansing fire before judgment, because of some minor faults that may remain to be purged away. Does not Christ, the Truth, say that if anyone blasphemes against the Holy Spirit he shall not be forgiven 'either in this world or in the world to come'? From this statement we learn that some sins can be forgiven in this world and some in the world to come. For, if forgiveness is refused for a particular sin, we conclude logically that it is granted for others. This must apply, as I said, to slight transgressions." ^{St. Pope Gregory the Great, 590 A.D.} "The need for integrity obviously becomes necessary after death, for entering into perfect and complete communion with God. Those who do not possess this integrity must undergo purification. This is suggested by a text of St Paul [1 Cor 3:14-15]. The Apostle speaks of the value of each person's work which will be revealed on the day of judgment." ^{Blessed Pope John Paul II}



"King David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die.'" ^{2 Sam 12:13-14} God forgave David's guilt; but punished him for his sin. "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." ^{1 Cor 3:15}

Lord God Almighty, Your love is infinite, Your mercy endless, and Your justice perfect. You immediately welcome into Your eternal kingdom those of us who die in a perfect state of grace—no mortal sin, no venial sin, and no stain of sin. I ask You, in the Name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, to awaken all of us to Your call to pray for and offer the merit of our good deeds for our deceased brothers and sisters being purified before they come home to You in heaven. Amen.

