

***Question: Should an emphasis on going to heaven someday cause us to become indifferent to and neglectful of the problems in the present world and life? What would Jesus do?***

Christianity is not only about going to heaven some day. It is also about bringing something of heaven into the present. Jesus Christ left heaven and came to earth to teach us how to prepare for heaven by the way we live and serve in this present world. In his first public sermon, Jesus announced his mission with a quote from the prophet Isaiah that said: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free” (Luke 4:18 NIV). Of Jesus, it was reported that “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (Luke 7:22). To the rich young ruler, Jesus said: “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). He also taught that on the final day of judgment, acceptance into or rejection from heaven will be determined by whether one had fed the hungry, had given the thirsty a drink, had clothed the naked, had welcomed strangers or had visited the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25:33ff). To be a true follower of Jesus, one must do as he did and taught. He taught his disciples to love their enemies, promote peace, and not hatred and treat others as they want to be treated.

The new life lived by people of faith in Jesus and hope of heaven is a life of love, compassion and mercy for those who live around them. These are the people who are committed to world peace by declaring the message of reconciliation. Reconciliation with God also brings reconciliation with one another. The people who are looking forward to the new heaven and the new earth are the people who care about all that God created. The hope of heaven does not cause Christians to ignore the ills of the present world and focus only on the “pie in the sky in the sweet by and by.” It motivates them to build a better world both now and forever.

Christians have been at the forefront in trying to improve life on earth. They have established hospitals, set up facilities for care of children in need and provided homes for the elderly. Even now, there are Christians

serving in disaster areas rebuilding homes and providing medical treatments in Third World countries. True followers of Jesus are always working and praying for God to accomplish his “will on earth as it is in heaven” because that is what Jesus taught them to pray.

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