

The Kind of People Who Go to Heaven

by Bryan Gibson

Two very different groups of people are pictured in the Book of Revelation: those rewarded with heaven, and those punished with hell. Since we all want to go to heaven, let's find out all we can about that group.

They were Christians.

Saints is the particular term used in this book, which is just one of the ways Christians are described in the New Testament. They became Christians in the same way everyone else in the New Testament did—they had their sins washed away by the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5), something which takes place when one is baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16).

These Christians had fellowship with other Christians in a local church.

See the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

These Christians had faith.

They were commended for their faith (Revelation 2:19), the importance of which is seen in passages like 13:10 and 14:12, which speak of the patience and faith of the saints. This is certainly in harmony with the words of Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please God..."

These Christians also had love—for the Lord and for others.

They were not only commended for their faith, but also for their love (Revelation 2:19). Notice especially the following passage: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12:11). What this implies is that they loved the Lord even above their own lives.

These Christians feared God rather than man.

They were not among the "cowardly" spoken of in 21:8. They took very seriously the charge, "Be faithful, even to the point of death" (Revelation 2:10, NIV), because some of them actually gave their lives in service to Christ (Revelation 6:9; 20:4). They were faithful to the charge Jesus gave in Matthew 10:28: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

These Christians kept God's commandments.

The faithful are described in 14:12 as those “who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Those who keep His commandments, according to 22:14, are the ones who “have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

They Christians showed great perseverance and courage.

They continued to serve God faithfully even when it cost some of them their lives. Some were “slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (6:9). Others were “beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God” (20:4). They were truly “faithful, even to the point of death” (2:10, NIV).

These Christians would not teach, believe, or practice a lie.

Notice who is “before the throne” in 14:5: “No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.” But what about those who do teach, believe, or practice a lie? They are warned to repent, or suffer the consequences (2:14-16; 2:20-23), consequences which included the “lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (21:8). “Whoever loves and practices a lie” will be left outside the gate (22:15). So it is vitally important that we believe the truth, teach the truth, and practice the truth.

These Christians were willing to repent of any sins they committed.

Many admonitions to repentance are given in the early chapters (2:5; 2:21-22; 3:3; 3:19). Clearly, those who wanted to please God and be saved eternally would need to repent of their sins. Later references speak of those who would not repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11). What do you suppose happened to them? If we want to be counted among the faithful in the final day, we must be willing to repent any time we sin against God.