

## Who is Going to Heaven?

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "Heaven"

### A. It's important for us as followers of Christ to think about the things of Heaven.

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. **Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.** For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3 (NLT)

*Note:* The great heroes of faith in the Bible longed for Heaven and thought about it all the time. "They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously, people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:13b-16 (NLT)

### B. Jesus told a parable about a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son to help us think rightly about who is going to Heaven.

"Jesus also told them other parables. He said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. **But they all refused to come!**'" Matthew 22:1-3 (NLT)

*Note:* Although it seems strange that anyone would refuse an invitation to a royal wedding, Jesus' story reminds us that we have all inherited a sin nature. Our default mindset is deliberate, determined independence from God. Heaven is God's home, and we want our own place.

"All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own." Isaiah 53:6a (NLT)

"No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; **no one is seeking God.** All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." Romans 3:10b-12 (NLT)

"So he sent other servants to tell them, 'The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and **everything is ready. Come to the banquet!**'" Matthew 22:4 (NLT)

*Note:* The king made sure that everything was taken care of so all his people had to do was come. This is the Good News. We don't have to earn our way into Heaven; we just need to accept Jesus' invitation.

"...Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." John 19:30 (NIV)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

"Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life."  
Revelation 22:17b (NLT)

"But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them. The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town." Matthew 22:5-7 (NLT)

*Note:* Some people ignored the king's invitation because they were too busy and concerned with the affairs of everyday life. Others violently opposed and even murdered some of the king's messengers because they wanted to be left alone. The king's wrath was rightly poured out on them.

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. **And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.** All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants." John 3:16-21 (NLT)

"And he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren't worthy of the honor. Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests." Matthew 22:8-10 (NLT)

*Note:* The king sent out a third invitation because he really wanted people to attend his son's banquet. This is God's heart. He wants as many people as possible to spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

"...I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, 'What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again?' ...The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, **he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.**" 2 Peter 3:3-4a & 9 (NLT)

"...Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them. But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with such scum?' Jesus answered them, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. **I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.**'" Luke 5:29-32 (NLT)

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are invited, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:11-14 (NIV)

*Note:* The king's guests from the streets brought nothing to the banquet. They were undeserving, filthy, and needed new wedding clothes which the king graciously provided. Likewise, we are sinful, filthy, and undeserving of God's grace. We can never enter Heaven trusting in our own righteousness or religious performance. We are made righteous only through faith in Jesus.

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but **filthy rags.**" Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)

"I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For **he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness.** I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels." Isaiah 61:10 (NLT)

"**We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.** And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." Romans 3:22-24 (NLT)

*Note:* Each of us has received an invitation today to come to Jesus and surrender our lives to Him. If we accept, he will forgive our sins, adopt us into His family, and give us abundant life that will begin today and last forever in Heaven. How will you respond?

"As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. For God says, 'At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.' Indeed, the 'right time' is now. Today is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 05-07-23 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

### Connect Group Questions:

Read Matthew 22:1-14 and then discuss the following questions:

1. What is the best wedding celebration you've ever been a part of? What made it so special? Why do you think Jesus compared his invitation to spend eternity with Him in Heaven to an invitation to a royal wedding?
2. Discuss the following statements:
  - We have all inherited a sin nature. Our default mindset is deliberate, determined independence from God. (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:10-12)
  - Some people ignore Jesus' invitation because they're too busy and concerned with the affairs of everyday life. Others violently oppose and even murder some of Jesus' messengers because they want to be left alone. (John 3:17-21)
  - God wants as many people as possible to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. (2Peter 3:4-9, Luke 5:27-32)

3. Describe a time in your life when you arrived at a party or celebration and felt completely underdressed. What did you do?
4. Read Isaiah 61:10 & 64:6 & Romans 3:22-24. What would you say to someone who believes they've done enough good things to earn a place in heaven?
5. Why do you think many people find it offensive when Christians say Jesus is the only way to Heaven? (John 14:6, Acts 4:12) What's at stake if we proclaim Jesus is the only way? What's at stake if we don't?
6. Read Hebrews 11:13-16 & Colossians 3:1-3. Why did the saints of the past think about Heaven so much? Why should we? (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)