

Why Will Heaven Be Safe?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | August 11, 2022



Have you ever considered what heaven will be like? What life on the New Earth will be like?

Surely, it will be a safe place, a place where a child can walk alone without any fear of assault—but what will make it a safe place?

Will it be safe because God will have angels with flaming swords on every corner?

Will it be safe because God has a better surveillance system than the CIA or NSA?

Will it be safe because God can immediately send lightning bolts down to destroy any wrongdoer on the spot?

Or will it be safe because it will be populated only by people who are safe to live next door to, that the only people in heaven are the ones in whom all sin and selfishness have been removed and within whom God's law of love has been restored? Because the people who live upon the Earth made new are people who love God and others more than self and would rather die than hurt another?

If this is what makes heaven safe, then how is it that self-centered sinners become such good and trustworthy neighbors? Can God achieve such healing of hearts and minds through the use of physical might and intimidation? Can God make it happen by inserting Himself into their minds and choosing for

them? Will people in heaven be mere robots controlled by God and that is why it will be safe? Or will people be free—and every single person there chooses to live trustworthy lives of love?

Making Heaven Safe

But how does such love get restored into our hearts and minds? It cannot be legally declared; it cannot be forced into an unwilling heart; it cannot be obtained through hard work or creative discovery. So then how?

It is through faith, through having our fear of God removed and being won to genuine trust in Him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is not by might, nor by power, but by how the Spirit works (Zechariah 4:6)—and the Spirit works by truth and love.

The truth of who God is, His character and methods of love as revealed by Jesus, destroys the lies of Satan and wins us to trust. And when we surrender to Him, the Spirit enters our hearts with the power of truth and love that cleanses, renews, and transforms. Guilt and shame are taken away, and new motives and desires are instilled. And when we respond to the gentle movements of the Spirit by choosing the truth, acting in love, and refusing the wrong, we are transformed by a living, active faith and grow in godliness with new hearts and right spirits—hearts that love and trust.

The plan of salvation has always been God's plan to remove sinfulness from human beings and restore His living law, His character, and methods of love into our hearts and minds as the motive for all action and, thereby, heal us and make us safe people to populate heaven.

It is a law that we become like the God we admire and worship. If we worship God in the truth that Jesus revealed, we become more like Jesus. But if we present God as a legal magistrate who makes up rules and inflicts punishment for rule-breaking, we don't grow to be safe neighbors; instead, we become intolerant critics and judgmental religionists who will condemn and coerce others.

It is only by experiencing God's grace and then living out that grace in how we treat others that we are transformed, but also, in so doing, we simultaneously spread the grace of God to others.

From Saul to Paul

Saul of Tarsus worshiped the dictator god and thought it right to use force of arms to evangelize, to turn back from heresy all who were following Jesus. But what impact do such methods have, not just on those who use them, but also on the converts gained by such methods? A person "converted" by threat, by fear of punishment, is not responding to love and truth but to fear and how best to survive. The law of God is not restored in them; instead, the law of sin and death, the survival drives, are merely reinforced, and all such converts become like their controlling and punishing god via the law of worship (by beholding we become changed) and by the law of exertion when the methods and motives of fear and selfishness are the basis of the conversion.

It is only the grace of God, the truth and love of God, that truly frees us from sin. So, when Saul met

Jesus on the road to Damascus and was convicted of how wrong he had been, he did not experience the judgmental punishing god he had been advancing, but he met Jesus and experienced instead His grace. And he left as Paul, a changed man. From that moment on, he evangelized with a new heart using new methods; he presented the truth in love while leaving others free. He advanced the gospel of grace, graciously, and not only did Paul grow in grace, but the true kingdom of God spread.

We can never advance God's kingdom using Satan's methods, and one of the traps in many religious circles is to evangelize through fear that appeals to selfishness, to advance a dogma, doctrinal list, or creed, legally, from an authoritarian god that will punish rule-breaking, which usually means some ritual or dogma unique to the one evangelizing. But even if the summary doctrinal point is technically correct—e.g., "Jesus died to save us from sin"—if the picture of God is authoritarian and the methods employed are not gracious, then the kingdom advanced is not God's but His enemy's. If we evangelize through fear, appealing not to God's grace, to God's love and character, but appeal instead to the motives of selfishness, we may very well hear Jesus say to us, like He did to Jewish leaders two thousand years ago, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Such legal-based evangelism as the Jews did two thousand years ago did not free hearts and minds from sin, and such converts were not made into safe neighbors for heaven.

I long for heaven, for the Earth made new. I know that it will be safe, but not because of God enforcing a list of rules. No, it will be safe because the only people who live there are like Jesus, because every single person there would give their life so that others may live. I pray that Jesus will finish His work in me and make me ready to live in that place. And I pray that I might graciously represent His gospel of grace.