



The

CLOSEST THING

to

Heaven

The Closest Thing to *Heaven*

Have you ever said, “Oh well, tomorrow is another day”?

Whether we are optimists or pessimists, we all look forward to better things in our lives. We hope that tomorrow we will get along better with our spouse, that next week we will finally finish what we couldn't get done this week, and that next year we will get a raise.

But think: What if nothing would ever get better than it is now? What if the love you have felt and the goodness you have received is all you will ever receive? What if enjoying parts of this life is the closest to Heaven you ever get?

Many people expect God to automatically admit them to Heaven. This misunderstanding underlies all the jokes about St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. Too many don't seriously consider that they may, by their everyday choices, be choosing to go to Hell.

The terrible reality for many people is this: What they know today is the closest to Heaven they will ever get. Heaven is a perfect place of goodness where God rules supreme, so how can someone who rejects and ignores God expect to go there? They do not belong or fit there.

Jesus said, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat,” and “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14).

God—the source of good things

Every good thing can be traced back to God. The things we enjoy—sunsets, friends, good food, the satisfaction of a job well done—are gifts from God. God made the earth. He made each of us. He made us to enjoy good things. God is utterly good. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

For Christians, the good things of earth are only a taste of all the good we will know in glory. However, God showers many of His good gifts on everyone, regardless of whether we believe in Him or not. He “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

God kindly gives everyone, even atheists, good things every day. For most people, the blessings will, because of their own choice, come to an end. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

Every
good
thing
is from
God.

Hell—no trace of God

In Hell there will be no trace of God. Those who enter there will “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

God will fully and finally withdraw from those who wanted to live their lives without Him. Because God is not there, Hell has none of the good things we have on earth. It has nothing good. It has all the bad and evil we experience here, plus more pain, loneliness, and emptiness than we can imagine.

What would life be like without God? That is what Hell is like.

No love. The love of a husband or wife or the special affection from a child is God’s gift to us. The Bible says, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Without God’s love, there can be no good relationships and no friends. There will be no love in Hell.

No rest. We face pains and stresses here, but much of life is comfortable because of God’s goodness to us. We have food, shelter, and clothing. But in Hell there is no rest. Rather, Hell is endlessly painful. Those in Hell will be “tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). There will be “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42).

No light. Here we enjoy a new day every morning as the sun rises. But the Bible refers to Hell as “outer darkness.” This may refer not only to the physical lack of light, but also to the complete absence of anything beautiful, happy, glorious, or good.

Heaven—living with God

The Bible tells us God “will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:3, 4).

The choice is ours.

God does not want anyone to go to Hell. Through His Son Jesus, He made a way for us to choose Heaven. He forgives any who genuinely repent of sin and obey Him. The Bible says God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Are you as close to Heaven as you will ever get? If so, will you do something about it?

HELL—
no love,
no rest,
no light,
nothing
good.

Choose **Heaven;** Escape Hell

STEP OUT . . .

. . . of your sin. Acknowledge your position.

“There is none righteous” (Romans 3:10).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

. . . and be genuinely sorry for your sin.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

And, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

STEP UP . . .

. . . to Christ.

Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

. . . and confess Him.

He also said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

. . . and depend on Him.

“For without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

STEP INTO . . .

. . . eternal life.

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

. . . joy in Jesus.

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

. . . reading God’s Word, the Bible.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalm 19:7, 8).

. . . eternal glory.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).