

Are There Bathrooms in Heaven? By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. x5050424
1 Peter 2:2-10 and John 14:1-14
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What will happen to us when we die? Is this life all there is—a flash in the pan and it's all over? Do we go for it all and get as much for ourselves during this life because that's all there is? Or...will we spend an eternity, a forever, in one of two places: heaven or hell? During this life, am I going to the train station to buy a ticket to one of two destinations, paying for it in the currency of the way I live my life, without knowing for which destination I'm headed until the train pulls out of the station?

This question of destiny is an eternal question. It has been asked by human beings since they attained the capacity for reasoning and questioning. There must be some kind meaning beyond the bounds of this life. Call it a “search for transcendence” – something that transcends, or goes beyond the limits of our lives, giving them greater meaning than simply our years here on earth. The search is carried out in many ways by various religions and cultures. If the leaders of Christian church do not help in the human quest for spirituality and eternal meaning, men and women go off on their own quest. Shirley MacLaine is one example and cults another.

Our answer in the Christian church is that there is a God who is beyond the limits of our lives and yet touches them daily. Our assurance, given to us by Jesus and recorded by John, was read in our second Scripture Lesson: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”¹ The Revised Standard Version translated that, “there are many rooms.”

What is heaven like? Is it a house with a lot of rooms? Is it like a cloud as we frequently see in cartoons? Is it a place where your every wish is granted? A most-haunting episode of the original TV series "Twilight Zone" remains in my head from childhood. A despicable gangster died and went to a heavenly-pleasing place. He wondered why, when he had lived a less-than-respectable life, he should be met by a kindly host, beautiful women and sumptuous food. His every wish was granted and his every fantasy fulfilled. After gorging himself on all his favorite dishes, he went downstairs to play pool. He took a break shot and every billiard ball went into a pocket. That was the end of the billiard game. Finally, frustrated with having everything be so perfect, he complained to his host, “I’m tired of this place. I want to go to the other place.”

In a deep but assertive voice, the host answered, “This is the other place.” The place where our every wish is granted is not necessarily heaven!

In considering heaven, there is the question of resurrection— being raised to new life. Are we resurrected spiritually or bodily? If bodily, then we have a whole new set of questions. If bodily, is there enough room for all of the people who deserve to go to heaven? If bodily, where is heaven? We have not found it through space probes, telescopes, or radio signals. If bodily, is one those rooms in God's house the bathroom? If we have a body, we need to take baths. We need to eat, and if we eat, we need to eliminate. If there is a bathroom in heaven, where does plumbing lead? I have a Doctor of Ministry degree, I have been to seminary, and I read a lot, but I don't have the answers to those questions.

Let me tell you about one church that taught the bodily resurrection. A person in that church may not be cremated. They must be buried in a cemetery. What happens when all of the ground is taken up by graves? Worse than that, the members of this church are taught not to donate their body organs to others who need them, because they will need them for their own resurrection. That appears to me to be contrary to what Jesus taught about giving to others, even laying down our lives so that others might live.

I do not have absolute answers to questions about the resurrection. I have what works for me. I believe in some kind spiritual resurrection. At my death, some part of me called “the spirit” goes to be part of God, wherever God is and whatever God is like. If God provides the miracle of bodily

¹John 14:1

resurrection, then God does whatever miracles are needed to provide me with the body I need, and will thank me for having made whatever organ donations I made!

“Many rooms” does not refer to a blue room or a peach room, depending upon your choice of color. Imagine all that redecorating every time styles change. God is not some hotel room clerk asking whether you want a room facing the mountains or the lake. “Many rooms” does not mean one room for whites, another for Blacks, and another for Browns. It does not mean one each for Episcopalians, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and United Church of Christ. “Many rooms” does not mean a hierarchy with the best rooms assigned to popes, better rooms to bishops and saints, good rooms to priests and ministers, and shabbier rooms to moderate sinners.

“Many rooms” or “many dwelling places” means there is sufficient room for all who choose to be living in God's dwelling place and who live their earthly lives in faithful obedience.

Many rooms means we may be surprised when we realize who else made it to heaven: “My. I didn't expect to see you here!” Perhaps we did not understand that person the way God did.

One interpreter says Jesus, using “many rooms” was describing to the disciples a resting place or place to dwell in peace after the struggles of life.

But these questions and these answers are not really important. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” What is important isn't the destination, it is the trip itself. An Amtrak ad that I have liked is, “The train isn't the fastest way to get to a place, it is a place!”

Some train trips better than others. When the trip is going well and there is good service, the train is comfortable. One does not need to worry about traffic. She can get up and go to the snack bar or dining car, or even the bathroom. In the trains out west one can go to the vista dome and get a beautiful view of the passing countryside or approaching mountains. One can make new friends, read to child, or listen to a person tell of their sorrows or joys. What is important is the trip itself.

It is a shame to be so worried about reaching a destination that we never enjoy the trip. Jesus was here on earth living a human life and taking the trip, not worrying about making it to end of the line.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He said, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”² We can read this two ways. One is the way of spiritual exclusion. The other is the way of spiritual awareness.

Some Christians read this in the way of spiritual exclusion, believing that Jesus would exclude from heaven those who do not confess him as Lord and Savior. Those who follow this way of spiritual exclusion do not know Jesus' way. Jesus did not exclude!

Jesus asks all people to follow his way of living. This is the way of spiritual awareness. We come to the father by following Jesus' way of love and compassion. We live our lives the way Jesus lived his life.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In other words, Jesus is sufficient: in Jesus is completeness of life. The way means that during this life, there is the Eternal breaking through to our limited existence. That sense of the Eternal gives us perspective: our problems and pains are lessened. The misfortunes of others become more important and we work to solve inequities and heal hurts because we know all people are God's children. Instead of worrying about bathrooms in heaven, we will worry about bathrooms for all people here on earth: good sanitary conditions and clean water supplies to lessen disease and starvation.

Jesus is the Way. We are on a pilgrimage. We are in a long procession of followers of Jesus: of lovers of God. We have joined that procession which leads to the goal of eternal life with God. The kingdom of God is among us now, at times right here in our church fellowship when care for the needs of others is shown.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the truth or revelation of God who is as close to us as a father or mother. Live in Jesus and let Jesus live in you, and you will be on your way.

²John 14:6