

STAIRWAY or HIGHWAY

INTRODUCTION

- I. There are many popular songs about “heaven” and “hell.”
 - A. However, there are songs that refer to **each** of these places, but a contrast is seen about the “way” to REACH each place, as there is a *part* of the word “stairway” and “highway” in the form of “way” (in the letters w-a-y) of the words “stairway” and “highway.”
 1. Led Zeppelin sang a song called “Stairway to Heaven.”
 2. Then, AC-DC recorded a song called “Highway to Hell.”
 - B. This lesson illustrates the difference between the 2 places, and the contrastive WAYS traveling TO each place.
- II. In the New Testament, even JESUS made the distinction between the 2 places, and the ways getting to each one. Matt. 7:13-14 (Read or Quote)

DISCUSSION

I. In the 1st place, the CONTRAST BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL.

- A. There are actually 3 “heavens” discussed in the Bible.
 1. The 1st heaven is the region or atmosphere of the air where birds fly. Matt. 8:20
 2. The 2nd heaven is the region of the stars and other heavenly bodies. Gen. 1:14-16; Matt. 24:29
 3. The 3rd heaven is the abode of God and the holy angels. Matt. 5:34; 6:9; 2 Cor. 12:2
- B. The word “hell” is from the Greek word gehenna, which describes the place of Satan and the wicked, the ultimate home of all the lost at the end of the world.
 1. Hell is a place of “everlasting punishment.” Matt. 25:46
 2. Hell is a place of “everlasting” fire. Mark 9:43-49
 - a. In this passage, Christ uses the words “hand”, “feet” and “eyes”, which are parts of the body that are involved in all our sins. Ro. 6:13; 1Co.12:14-20
 - b. One CAN use his eyes to visualize or behold things that look good but can easily lead us to sin, or are involved IN sinful things. 2 Sam. 11:2
 - 1) Our feet can take us into sinful activity. Prov. 6:16-18
 - 2) Our hands can be used to engage in sinful activities. Acts 2:23
 - 3) Our eyes can see things that get to our hearts to commit sin. Matt. 5:28; 2 Pet. 3:14

II. In the 2nd place, the WAYS OF GETTING TO HEAVEN OR HELL.

- A. 1st of all, the song title (using the word “stairway” as seen in the song “Stairway to Heaven”).
 1. When we think of a “stairway”, we think of going UP in or UPON a building, but heaven itself is UP from the earth. John 3:13
 2. When we think of a “stairway”, we think of something fairly “narrow”, usually enough room for one person at a time, or few at the most 2, to get on at the same time.
 3. Then, when we think of a “stairway”, we are aware of at least **some effort** involved in taking the steps TO our destination.

- a. The KJV of the Bible uses the words “*strait*” (meaning “narrow”) AND the word “*narrow*”, but the NJV reads “*narrow is the gate and difficult is the way.*”
 - b. A mob of people cannot go into a narrow gate at the same time.
 - c. It takes decision and effort to go through a narrow gate.
- B. Some people say the church of Christ is “too narrow minded” in thinking that baptism is essential to salvation when others don’t believe such, AND that we think only the church established by Christ is the only one traveling the stairway to heaven, but the word “the” gate and “the” way specifies one and excludes “many”, and even Jesus used the words “the” to describe the “way” for the **few** who enter, and the **many** who choose the highway to hell. Our Lord appears to be more narrow minded than our religious neighbors and liberal brethren want Him to be. Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24
- C. Then we are reminded of single “steps” that one takes in climbing a ladder.
1. There are 5 steps involved in God’s plan of salvation.
 - a. The 1st step is that of “hearing” the word of God. Matt. 13:15; Luke 8:8
 - b. The 2nd step is that of “faith”, the believing of that which we hear. Rom. 10:17
 - c. The 3rd step is that of “confession” of the faith we have. Acts 8:35-37
 - d. The 4th step is that of “repentance” (changing our minds about the love and practice of sinful things). Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
 - e. The 5th and final step into salvation is baptism (or immersion in water). Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21
 2. Then, we “add” to certain things in our journey to heaven, just as one “adds” steps to his climb in entering the gate. 2 Pet. 1:5-7

CONCLUSION

- I. Which **way** are you traveling RIGHT NOW?
 - A. Either way leads to a final destination.
 1. The stairway leads to heaven, and we are reminded that the Lord did not promise that this narrow way would be easy, but He does promise that the destination reached will well be worth the effort and decision made to enter and climb this stairway to heaven.
 2. The highway to hell is the easy way, but it is broad to make room for all who do not choose to climb the stairway to heaven, which many choose to travel, but it will bring an eternity of sorrow and regret.
 - B. Every responsible person is traveling one of these 2 ways—RIGHT NOW.
 1. One cannot go both ways at the same time?
 2. Some think they are on the stairway to heaven because they have submitted to religious leaders who have deceived them in behalf of Satan.
- II. If you have never entered the stairway to heaven, and have taken the first step of faith, you need to continue the steps of repentance and faith and baptism and travel the way to eternal life and glory, OR if you have once entered the stairway, but have left the way, you need to get back ON the way by repenting and praying to God for forgiveness.

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