



# **Why Doesn't God Just Take Me To Heaven?**

**By**

**Mark McGee**

Have you ever asked yourself that question? “Why doesn’t God just take me to Heaven?” Christians ask that question for many reasons. Some are excited to see Jesus. Others suffer from disease and pain and want eternal relief. Some just can’t stand living in this world any longer and want to get out of it and go to a place where they are loved and welcomed. Whatever the reason for asking that question, it’s important we consider it.

The answer lies in our understanding of God’s design for Creation and Redemption. In the beginning, God Created the heavens and the earth. On the 6th day of Creation, God made the first human beings.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:26-27

God chose to Create humans in “Our image, according to Our likeness.” The words “image” and “likeness” in Hebrew mean “strong likeness to the person or thing it represents, strong resemblance, similar in form, to be like something else in action or appearance.” God Created many things during six days of Creation, but He created only one being that was in His “image” and “likeness.” God Created humans to be like Him in having dominion over Creation – “let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that

creeps on the earth.” The word “dominion” means “to rule, tread down, subjugate, dominate.” Even as God ruled the universe, He Created man to rule the earth with Him. That is a part of man being Created in the “image” and “likeness” of God.

Humanity's dominion was short and ended badly. The first man and woman disobeyed God and fell into a position far from their original place with Him. However, God did not give up on humans and had a plan to redeem them. His purpose? To once again be in His “image” and “likeness” and rule with Him.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:28-30

God predetermined that those He foreknew and called would be “conformed to the image of His Son.” The word “conformed” means “having the same form as another.” The word “image” speaks to both the ideas of representation and manifestation. Christians know that they'll be “like Christ” when they get to Heaven, but what does this have to do with now?

The Apostle Paul was a leading advocate of the idea of God doing a special work in the lives of His children “before” they left earth for Heaven. Let’s see what else Paul said that might help us understand why we’re still here.

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:7-11

Paul spoke about his own struggles in this life. It was important to him that he would understand the righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. He wanted to have an intimate knowledge of Christ and experience His power, and the fellowship of His sufferings, “being conformed to His death.” Was that something Paul would experience when he arrived in Heaven? He went on to write, “if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” This is a deep truth. Paul, through faith in Christ and sharing in the sufferings of Christ, would be fashioned into both the representation and manifestation of Christ. And that comes before “the resurrection from the dead.” If God took us straight to Heaven after we were saved, we

would not experience the great power and change in our lives described by the Apostle Paul. We would miss out on an amazing experience of the depth of God's Love for us.

God is doing a special work in the lives of His children on earth. He is forming us – through faith and sharing in both Christ's power and His suffering – into the sweet image of His Son. God is preparing us to rule with Him. This life is a training ground. The lessons we learn here – the experiences we have here and now – will benefit us greatly through eternity. But most of all – this life is what we have to please Him from our free will and love for Him. How we live our lives now is of great consequence to how we will live our lives in Heaven. The time is soon coming for all of us when God will complete His Redemption and take us to be with Him where we will rule and reign forever and ever and ever.

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Philippians 3:17-22

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