

The Gables – How to Get to Heaven

Introduction:

Heaven Joke # 1:

Recently a teacher, a garbage collector, and a lawyer wound up together at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter informed them that in order to get into Heaven, they would each have to answer one question.

St. Peter addressed the teacher and asked, "What was the name of the ship that crashed into the iceberg? They just made a movie about it."

The teacher answered quickly, "That would be the Titanic." St. Peter let him through the gate.

St. Peter turned to the garbage man and, figuring Heaven didn't really need all the odors that this guy would bring with him, decided to make the question a little harder: "How many people died on the ship?"

Fortunately for him, the trash man had just seen the movie. "1,228," he answered.

"That's right! You may enter."

St. Peter turned to the lawyer and said, "Name them."

Heaven Joke # 2:

Three people died: a Doctor, a school teacher, and the head of a large HMO. They met St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter asked the doctor, "What did you do while you lived on Earth?"

The Doctor replied, "I healed the sick, and if they could not pay their bill, I would care for them for free."

St. Peter told the Doctor, "You may go in."

St. Peter then asked the teacher what she did while on earth and she replied, "I taught educationally challenged children."

St. Peter then told her, "You may go in."

St. Peter asked the third man, "What did you do?"

The man hung his head and replied, "I ran a large HMO at an insurance company."

To which St. Peter replied, "You may go in, but you can only stay 3 days."

Source for all of the above jokes:

<http://www.ahajokes.com/he15.html>

<http://www.ahajokes.com/he27.html>

Dialog between Rick & Donna:

Rick: Hey Donna. What do you think of the jokes I just told?

Donna: Well, I'm glad I'm not a lawyer or the head of an HMO... I hope St. Peter doesn't ask me any really hard questions when it's my turn to try to get into heaven.

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Rick: Donna, those are just jokes. Unfortunately, that's what a lot of people think you have to do to get into heaven.

Donna: What do you mean?

Rick: Well, a lot of people think that they way to get into heaven is by doing good works.

Donna: What do you mean by, 'good works'?

Rick: Oh, like the doctor and school teacher who spent their lives helping other people.

Donna: What's wrong with that?

Rick: Nothing is wrong with that. Those are extremely honorable professions, and I'm sure they helped a lot of people, but that's not how you get into heaven.

Donna: If you don't get into heaven by helping other people, then why bother?

Rick: What did Jesus say are the two greatest commandments?

Donna: To love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Rick: Correct. Those are commandments on how we should live; they are not the means by which we get into heaven.

Donna: I don't get it. Doesn't the Bible say God will judge us one day?

Rick: Yes. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment."

Donna: I thought that when you stand before God, He looks at the good things you did, and then the bad things you did, and if you did more good things than bad things he lets you into heaven.

Rick: That sounds nice, but it's not what the Bible says. Nothing good you do can undo the bad you've done. Your past is locked in concrete and can't be changed.

Donna: What does the Bible say about getting into heaven?

Rick: Well, we have to realize that in God's eyes we aren't good enough to get into heaven on our own, no matter how much good we think we've done in life.

- Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

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- Romans 3:23 says, "...for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..."

Donna: Well, nobody's perfect.

Rick: I know, but that's God's standard for getting into heaven. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Donna: Then no one will ever get into heaven.

Rick: That's partially correct. No one can ever get into heaven on their own. Nothing you or I ever do on my own will ever be good enough to get us into heaven. God is perfect and holy, we are imperfect and unholy. In describing heaven, Revelation 21:27 says, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Donna: That's not fair. How can God have such a high standard for getting into heaven that no one can reach?

Rick: God knows we can't reach it on our own, but in His great love for us, he sent his son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

- Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." So, it's not a work that we've done; it's a gift.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Donna: So, if it's a gift, does that mean we have to receive it?

Rick: Yes.

Donna: Is that all we have to do?

Rick: To get into heaven, we must repent, believe and receive.

- Luke 13:3 says, "I tell you, no! But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish." Repentance means to turn away from our sinful life and follow the path God has for us.
- John 3:36 says, "Whoever **believes** in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." If we believe that Jesus' death and suffering on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, then the righteousness of Christ is transferred to our account, and our slate is wiped clean. It's as if we'd never sinned.
- John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did **receive** him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..." We must ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior and receive the gift of eternal life. God doesn't force himself on us.
- Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

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- So, what have you learned, Donna?

Donna: That getting into heaven doesn't depend on we do, but on what Jesus did.

Rick: Exactly. It's just the hymn called *Jesus Paid it All* says,

Jesus paid it all
All to Him I owe
Sin hath left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow

Donna: Why does God judge us if there is nothing we can do to save ourselves?

Rick:

- As stated in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
- 1 Corinthians 3:14-16 says, "If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames."
- So, God has good works for us to do, but it has nothing to do with us getting into heaven. All the glory goes to God for our salvation. None of it goes to us.