

## Invitation

[This is for those who have not yet accepted God's wonderful invitation. If you have, please share it with someone you know who has not.]

**You** are invited. You really are. You're invited to join a family gathering at a wonderful, ongoing celebration of Peace, Love, and Beauty, better than any party you could ever imagine.

I was discussing this invitation with a man I know and respect. I said, "All that anyone really has to do is say 'Yes.'" He corrected me by saying, "All they have to do is not say 'No.'" And he was right.

God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – dearly wants you to join Him in Heaven, when you reach the end of your life on earth. He wants you to join His family, to be His own adopted child, and to live joyfully with Him in His home, forever. He invites you to enter into that relationship now, and begin enjoying its blessings.

How do I know this? Let me tell you.

For many years, when I was young, I was afraid of dying, because I knew I would go to Hell. I had lied, stolen, disobeyed my parents, and committed quite a number of other sins. I believed sinners go to Hell. I knew I'd rather to go to Heaven, because Hell was certain to be horrible. But I knew I was lost. Mostly I was able to avoid thinking about it – after all, I still had many years ahead of me.

So for years I lived with a burden of guilt and fear. Until one day I learned the truth, from God's word, the Bible: God really does not want me to go to Hell. My sins deserve punishment – but Jesus took the punishment my sins deserve. He suffered and died to pay for my sins – and also for yours, and for everyone's. I am forgiven! And you are forgiven.

Who says so? God's word, the Holy Bible, says so, in several places, like this:

*For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn*

*the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of [doing good] works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

What did I have to do so that my sins would be forgiven? Nothing. Jesus did it all, for me.

What do you have to do for your sins (few or many) to be forgiven? Nothing. Jesus did it all, for you.

So God is saying to me, and also to you, "Please come and live me forever in Heaven. I love you. I want you to be with me. That's the special destiny I have planned for you. That's what I created you for. Please come. Please don't say 'No.'"

Of course there's more to it than that.

First of all, there's only one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are one. And there's no provision for a second God. You and I must leave behind our inclination to want to be the boss. God is God. I'm not, and you're not. God is the boss. Once you realize this, it's very freeing. We don't have to manage everything. We can trust God to do that. He is qualified to do it; you and I are not.

Sometimes, when we pray, our attitude is, "Father, Your will be done – unless, of course, it doesn't agree with what I want." We may not say that or even think it, but in truth that's where we are often coming from. We need to outgrow that.

But beyond that, there's the matter of sin. Our sins in this life – all of them – have been and will be forgiven, but our sinful nature has to be corrected.

Nobody sins in Heaven. It's not a matter of getting kicked out; if you still want to sin, you can't even get in. The door is wide open, but a person who is hanging on to a desire to sin can't get through it, because sin cannot enter into God's presence.

God is holy, and His home is a holy place. Unholiness (sin) can't exist there.

What are we supposed to do about that? Can we flip a switch, and we'll no longer have any desire to do those things that are sinful? We do know what most of those things are, from the Ten Commandments and other admonitions such as "Love your neighbor as yourself." Can we just stop sinning, and even wanting to sin, that easily?

Of course we can't, and God doesn't expect us to. But, with God's help, we can begin and continue the process that will get us there. The main thing, the most important thing, is to want to do it. Then the first thing is to take a firm step in that direction.

One way to start is to use a little prayer that will help us to focus on our part and God's part in the process. Something like this:

**God, I know I'm a sinner. I thank you for loving me, and for forgiving my sins by having Jesus suffer punishment that I deserve. Please help me love you more than I love sinning. Help me become the person You want me to be. Give me the strength to commit to that and stick with it, with the help of Your Holy Spirit, until I join You in Heaven. Amen.**

Please be clear, though: this is not a magic incantation. The process will make you holy, so that you can come into God's presence in Heaven. But it can only succeed if you commit to it and allow the Holy Spirit to make all the necessary changes in your character. And that can only happen if you actively participate.

Participate how? I don't know all that the Holy Spirit will lead you to do, but I can tell you a few things:

- You need Christian fellowship – you need church. You need to get into a Bible-believing, God-blessed community of souls who are committed to being God's children. Our first way of "connecting" to God is to get connected to His people.
- You need God's word. You need to read and study the Bible, to learn what God has said about Himself and His people, through the writers who wrote the Bible books under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Start with the four gospels, then the rest of the New Testament. When that becomes familiar territory, go to the Old Testament for background. Treat the Bible as a personal message from God to you, which it is. The church you select should offer opportunities to study and learn from the Bible.



- You need to pray often. If you don't know how to pray, go to the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) and use it as a pattern for your own prayers. Praise God because He is totally good and loving, and thank Him for your blessings. Then conversationally tell God where you are and what you're concerned about, and allow the Holy Spirit to give you something at that time – guidance, peace, hope, joy – all good.

If you will begin this way, with faithfulness and determination, the Holy Spirit will take it from there and "lead you into all the truth," as Jesus promised (John 16:13)

Think about, and remember, these promises of Jesus:

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30)

*"The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that [you] may have life and have it abundantly."* (John 10:10)

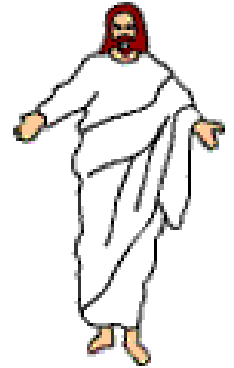
*"... the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."* (John 14:26-27)

My prayer for you, the one who is reading this, is that God will open your eyes and your mind to the wonder and the beauty of His holiness, and the awesome reality that He loves you, more than you have ever loved anyone or anything, and He longs for you to love Him in return, and to accept His invitation to be with Him joyfully, as His adopted child, forever. I pray that He will give you grace to feel and appreciate His love for you and His desire to be with you.

You are invited to live forever with God in Heaven. Please do not tell Him, 'No.'

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, blessed Holy Spirit, help us now and always to say a heartfelt 'YES!' to all of Your invitations. Amen.

*Brother Roland*



# The Heavenly Wedding

In ancient Hebrew tradition, a wedding took place in a certain way. First, the bridegroom would leave his house and travel to the bride's home, no matter how far away it was. He would present his proposal of marriage to the bride's family. If the bride chose to accept the groom as her husband, she would so indicate. The two families would negotiate a "bride price," a dowry, intended to compensate the bride's family for their loss of her. Then the covenant of their betrothal would be announced, and the groom would return to his own house.

The groom and bride would remain separately in their homes for a period of time, during which each would prepare for the coming marriage. The groom would be lovingly preparing his home for the bride to come and live there. The bride would be carefully preparing herself for that special day, making herself ready to live in the home the groom was preparing. There was no specification for how long this period of separation would be. The groom was not permitted to drink alcohol during this time.

Then, when the groom's father judged that the home for the couple was ready, the groom would return to the home of the bride. She didn't know when he was coming, so she had to be ready to go when he arrived. Then the couple would go to the groom's house, to the home he had prepared for her, and the marriage would become complete. There was also a party, a wedding banquet, especially when the groom's family was wealthy.

This ancient Hebrew tradition is a wonderful picture of God's plan for us. Do you see how Jesus, the Bridegroom, followed the ancient Hebrew tradition in so many ways (and I haven't listed all of them) in preparation for His marriage to His Bride, the Church?

- Jesus left His home, Heaven, to come to ours, this world.
- He presented His proposal (the Gospel) to us: *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:28-29)
- Those of us who agree to the marriage have said 'Yes' to Him.
- He paid the price for His Bride, with His bloody death on the Cross.
- He returned to His home for the time of preparation: *"My Father's house has many rooms ... I am going there to prepare a place for you."* (John 14:2)
- He said He would not drink alcohol until the marriage was completed: *"I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* (Matthew 26:29)
- The Church is supposed to be preparing for His return during this time of separation.
- He will come back to get us and take us to His (and our) eternal home: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* (John 14:3)

Come, Lord Jesus!

---

**If you have a question about the Bible or the Christian life, send it to me and I'll try to give you an answer. It may be something I can share in the "Good News Guide."**

**Brother Roland, P. O. Box 14, Fayetteville, PA 17222**

## Heaven Is a Wonderful Place

Actually, it's not a place – it's just being with God in eternity – we obviously have no adequate mental picture of that. But it will be wonderful! This puzzle lists some things we'll find (and others we won't find) there. Enjoy!

**Puzzle:**

U F Z O I X E T X I J T A P Y H I J A N O T E M P L E C V D G U L B  
H C M N J P V C T K L L X G R F X P L T H R O N E O F G O D Q C R B  
G I K I Y Q C K U R S D M I U P G J J V N O Z C J U D Q B O T H A W  
Z O V E J N M K M T E A L W A A P O N S S A L G F O A E S W B U E Q  
N U N Q M V O T T G V E I O T S E R V A N T S O F T H E L O R D P X  
O U O G Z A J M C B D A O N G T Y P R A I S E O X H M T Z H T E F F  
S R N P U D H O O Y R F U F T F N M K A U Y A P O S T L E S V E O H  
E N I X K T A S N R N I X N L S O O B J Y C H L Q B X K Z O E L S F  
L O G P A N G N O D E B D O K I P S R Q H Q Y J G K K N L X E J E H  
F G H V I Y E J V N L T Y E W L F M T X G C E P F U P I E A K J T F  
I O T M G I M L N L D D R V G P N E X E I W I B M J F E R B X N A X  
S W T G A E O C R O W N S O F R I G H T E O U S N E S S A Y E U G X  
H D H N Y H D L B X M E O O U P O D Y L M R E T E L I M W C N O S H  
N L E I G M N O L N F O K S E B U O E Q V O T T E F G U Z E E E S W  
E O R V V N A D E P O Z R X H R L D M K Q K E S O O N R N S B S X N  
S R E I S K A A S O R E K E Q G F E H T G R N E D Z T D M O E X I H  
S E N G Z C H N S R A V V K S O M Y S R N F N T H C I N R N P A O W  
H P C S Z I P A E L P E D I U O N O E A N O H D B N L G D I P L A S  
G P U K K F L E D N A U M N L H R V L I Y E S R G Z N A X E Y L X K  
I U U N S E A L N H M M D P N N I R Y L F U P J R I S H R M L U L S  
P S E A H L D C E C W A B S C R Y F O A C A O Q N E K O A O H G K T  
A G U H K L N N S P T O G O L B A H T W L Y I I R T M R F I G I J Z  
Z N V T T O J U S I C I R A F C S H J A V F H O V O T J C U L H F T  
Q I Y E I W A G O N A N T S Q G E G X E S S M X N Y A F K O O H B Q  
X D V U T S O N R R X S G Q H R O Q A K M O T N R S Q X A O R E S K  
S D T Q N H S I O V Y Q Z G F I A D U J N D T S P Q U W M S Y N V J  
E E A N G I O H H R E W A R D S P E K T H C J E F I L F O K O O B P  
T W U A S P B T C X N E W J E R U S A L E M R O K M B E T C U N F X  
C U U B W A J O G E Q B I V C T B L T I E F I L F O R E T A W L C Q  
T A H S L E G N A V P O R R R H B Z O V N N L J E S U S C H R I S T

**Words:**

- |                 |                    |                  |                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| ALPHA AND OMEGA | GOD THE FATHER     | NO MORE SADNESS  | SERVANTS OF THE |
| ANGELS          | HOLY CITY          | NO MORE SORROW   | LORD            |
| APOSTLES        | HOLY MARTYRS       | NO MORE TROUBLES | SHINING ROBES   |
| BANQUET         | HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL | NO NIGHT THERE   | STREETS OF GOLD |
| BLESSEDNESS     | JESUS CHRIST       | NO SELFISHNESS   | THANKSGIVING    |
| BOOK OF LIFE    | JEWELLED           | NO SHAME         | THRONE OF GOD   |
| BRIDEGROOM      | FOUNDATIONS        | NO TEMPLE        | TREE OF LIFE    |
| CROWNS OF       | LAMB OF GOD        | NOTHING UNCLEAR  | UNENDING JOY    |
| RIGHTEOUSNESS   | LIFE ETERNAL       | PEACE            | WALL OF JASPER  |
| CRYSTAL RIVER   | LOVE               | PRAISE           | WATER OF LIFE   |
| FELLOWSHIP      | NEW JERUSALEM      | REWARDS          | WEDDING SUPPER  |
| GATES OF PEARL  | NO EVIL            | SAINTS           | WORSHIPS        |
| GLORY           | NO MORE PAIN       | SEA OF GLASS     |                 |