

HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN FROM ANTARCTICA



By Pastor Larry Burd

AN ADVENTURE TO ANTARCTICA

“Dad, what are you going to do in Antarctica? Preach to penguins?”

That was the response of my children when I told them I wanted to go to Antarctica someday.

Antarctica, the Seventh Continent, has sometimes been referred to as the “White Continent.” The coldest temperature on earth, 128.6 degrees below zero (Fahrenheit), was recorded at the Russian Vostok Station on Antarctica July 21, 1983. National Geographic describes Antarctica as “a unique continent in that it does not have a native population. It is the only continent with no permanent human habitation.” There are mainly scientists and support staff from a number of countries that do research on Antarctica. There are also about 170,000 tourists each year who brave the frigid temperatures, and unpredictable weather conditions, to visit Antarctica. The majestic ice, snowcapped mountains, icebergs, penguins, whales, seals, and a variety of birds are all part of an adventure to Antarctica.

On October 30, 1987 I was reading in the Gospel of Luke and came to a verse where Jesus said, “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” When I read those words, I got into a little debate with God (and I never win in a debate with Him). I said, “There is no way I can ever preach in all the nations of the world.” But then I remembered what Jesus said in Mark 16:15, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” I was greatly challenged by those words. I was content to minister in my own country of America, but the words of Jesus penetrated deeply into my mind and heart. If God wanted me to minister in other places, then He would open the doors for me to go there. I decided that I was willing to go anywhere in the world for His glory, and so I wrote this one sentence prayer in the margin of my Bible: **I pray for the privilege of preaching the Gospel on every continent before I die.** I began to pray that if this was God’s will He would open the doors for ministry on the various continents according to His perfect timing, not mine. God is so faithful in answering prayer. Over the past 36 years, God has opened numerous opportunities for me to share the Good News of His amazing love and grace on six of the seven continents. He has now made it possible for me to travel to the last of the seven continents (Antarctica) and to fulfill my heart’s desire to share His Word, Will, and Ways with all who will listen.

Before I share with you how to get to Heaven from Antarctica, let me explain five reasons why I *should not* be going to Antarctica and also two compelling reasons why I *should* go to Antarctica.

FIVE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT GO TO ANTARCTICA

1. **It’s too COLD.** I inherited a condition called Raynaud’s Syndrome which causes my fingers and toes to feel numb and turn white or blue in cold conditions. I would much rather spend time in a warm climate than a cold one. I long to go to Florida, especially in the winter time which can be very cold in Pennsylvania, where I live.
2. **It’s CONTRARY to reason.** I have also suffered with bouts of Vertigo

which brings on a sense of movement or spinning, dizziness, nausea, and sometimes an inability to walk. Submitting myself to four days on a ship, crossing the Drake Passage, which has been known at times to be among the most violent waters in the world, from the tip of South America to the Antarctic Peninsula, would seem to be contrary to sound reasoning.

3. **It's in CONFLICT with the Whitetail deer season in Pennsylvania.** I have been an avid hunter all my life and to give up the prime two weeks of deer hunting to go to Antarctica is not something I would normally do.
4. **It's COSTLY to take a trip to Antarctica.** It requires a significant commitment and sacrifice to make it possible.
5. **It's CRAZY to do this some would say.** When I told my wife I had booked the trip to Antarctica on the World Explorer Ship with Quark Expeditions, her initial response was, "You're crazy." But she remarked on another day, that if one person's life was touched by the Lord, it would be worth the trip to Antarctica.

With all these reasons why I should not go to Antarctica, why am I going? What motivates me? Why am I willing to take on the challenges and risks of going to the coldest and most isolated continent on earth?

When the apostle Paul knew that hardships, persecution, and even imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem he went there anyway. In Acts 20:24 he said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Paul was committed to finish his ministry regardless of the cost or consequences. I desire to do the same.

TWO REASONS WHY I SHOULD GO TO ANTARCTICA

First, the clear commands of Jesus, my Lord and Savior, motivate me to go to Antarctica. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." These words, spoken by Jesus to His followers, have been known as *The Great Commission*. These divinely inspired words of Jesus are not just suggestions, to be considered, but commands to be obeyed by all His disciples who claim to know Him as their Savior and Lord. If I am a genuine follower of Jesus Christ, then I must obey His commands. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). I love Jesus, and I am on a mission to share His love and help people come to know Him and His love for them.

Jesus also spoke these powerful words, recorded in Acts 1:8, to His disciples shortly before He ascended back into heaven after His death and resurrection: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The King James Version of this verse ends with the

words, “unto the uttermost part of the earth.” I can’t think of a more uttermost part of the earth than Antarctica. God loves all the people of the world, and He will send some of His followers even to the “uttermost part of the earth” to communicate His love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, salvation, and the joy of being in heaven someday with Him. These Scriptures motivate me greatly and compel me to go anywhere God leads me, even to Antarctica.

Second, the call of God upon my life motivates me to go to Antarctica.

Shortly before my 17th birthday, I made the most important decision of my life. I spent nine days in a hospital in Pennsylvania as a result of having my tonsils removed. I had a terrible reaction to the anesthesia drugs that were used during the surgery and I was very sick. I began to wonder if I was going to die. All I could eat was Jello and ice chips, and I began to lose weight. Over the next several weeks I lost 24 pounds.

During the time in the hospital, I thought seriously about my life and about one question I could not get an answer to: *IF I DIE WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME AFTER DEATH?* I began to wonder if there really was a heaven and a hell and if there was, which one would I be going to after I departed this life? I didn’t know what I believed, but I was very concerned about my eternal destiny. Where could I turn to find answers to these troubling questions?

A man from the country church we attended as a family came to visit me in the hospital. He gave me a book about Christian athletes, and I read the book. It included a chapter about Bobby Richardson who played second base for the New York Yankees (1955-1966). He said he had everything he ever wanted in life; a great baseball career, a wonderful family, money, fame, and good health. But then, he said something that caught my attention: “Jesus Christ means more to me than baseball or anything else in life.”

At first, I thought he was a religious fanatic, but after a few days I was so curious about why Jesus meant so much to this man who seemed to have everything he ever wanted. Who was this man Jesus? Was He real? Was He more than just a great religious leader or an historical person? Did Jesus actually die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins? Was He really resurrected from the dead and still alive today? Could I know Him personally? Could He change my life and give me peace and joy and hope and even eternal life in heaven someday? I was soon to find the answers to all these questions.

A TURNING POINT

I wanted to know more about Jesus, so I decided to read the story about Bobby Richardson again. This time my heart seemed to be moved by the words I was reading: “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.” (John 3:16-17)

I began to realize that God loved me and sent Jesus into this sinful world to save me and give me eternal life. He did not want me to die without knowing Him.

I also began to recognize that I had sinned and broken God’s command-

ments and needed His forgiveness. Romans 6:23 declares, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." I deserved to die because of my sins and rebellion against God, but I now understood that Jesus died in my place so I could be forgiven and have eternal life by faith in Him.

Ephesians 2:8-9 came alive in me as I read the words, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast."

I discovered that grace is God's unmerited love and kindness freely given to all who trust in Jesus for salvation and not in themselves. Salvation cannot be earned by doing good works; it is a gift received by faith. Salvation is not doing, it's done. It's not achieving, it's receiving.

When Jesus died on the cross He said, "It is done" (John 19:30) and the full debt of our sins was paid for us when He shed His precious blood for our forgiveness.

Wow, these Scriptures, and powerful thoughts, moved my heart and I wanted to believe what I was reading.

In II Peter 3:9 I read, "The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." God had been patient with me and He didn't want me to perish, but He wanted me to repent, to turn around, and turn away from my sins. He wanted me to trust in Him as my personal Savior and Lord.

There was one more verse of Scripture that Bobby Richardson wrote about and it was II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if any man (this would apply to anyone as well) be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." These words captured my full attention and I wanted to experience them in my life. I wanted to have a new life of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment as well as joy and peace. I wanted to become a new creation and have the kind of life I was reading about. I could think of lots of things I wanted to have passed away in my life. I needed definite changes in my life. Jesus promised that new things would come into my life when He was within me.

How could Jesus Christ come into my life? If He was truly alive, He could do anything. He could give me forgiveness of my sins and reconcile me to God the Father and to others I needed to be reconciled to because of broken relationships. He could transform my life and give me eternal life. He could make me ready for heaven whenever my life was completed. It was all about Him and not about me.

FINDING THE TRUTH

I longed to know the truth that could set me free to be all that God created me to be. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man (meaning anyone) comes unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6) Jesus also said, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God, even to them

that believe on His name.” (John 1:11-12) I wanted to receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. I wanted His power in my life so I could become His child and seek to please Him.

I made a conscious decision to invite Jesus Christ into my life and to put my faith in Him alone. I had nothing to lose and everything to gain by trusting in Him. I was willing to repent of my sins and to go in a new direction in life.

The prayer that changed my life:

“Oh God, I need You. I thank You for sending Jesus to be my Savior and Lord. Thank You that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rose again from the dead to give me eternal life. I am willing to repent of my sins and go in a new direction in life. I put my faith in Jesus alone for my salvation. I receive Jesus into my life by faith. Thank You for making me ready for heaven when that day comes. Please give me Your power to live this new life in Christ and to glorify You forever. Amen.”

I prayed that prayer over 58 years ago and Jesus changed my life and every change He brought about has been a positive and lasting change. He gave me more than I ever deserved or expected in this life. He gave me the gift of eternal life and the assurance that I would be in heaven someday, not because of anything good I had done, but because of His great mercy, love and grace.

HEAVEN IS REAL

Within about a year after I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord He called me into the ministry. I did not want to be in the ministry, I wanted to be a lawyer; but God’s will is always best and so I chose to obey Him and say yes to His will for my life. I find tremendous joy in sharing my faith with others. It’s God’s call upon my life that motivates me to go to “the uttermost part of the earth,” even to Antarctica to share the good news about how Jesus Christ can transform a person’s life.

Heaven is a real place for real people who repent and put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Jesus said, “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news.” (Mark 1:15)

Heaven is the land of the living. Earth is the land of the dying. We are all in the process of dying. The Bible says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) Someday we will all have to stand before God and give an account of what we have done with our lives. Did we repent of our sins and trust Jesus Christ to save us, or did we turn away from Him and reject Him? There is coming a day when some people will hear those words from Jesus, “Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of the Lord.” (Matthew 25:21) But others will hear the words, “I never knew you; depart from Me.”

There is an expiration date for each of our lives and we do not know when that day will come for our departure from this life. II Corinthians 6:2 declares, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Don’t put off making a decision to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Tomorrow could be too late. Turn to Jesus today with all your heart, soul,

and strength. He will not turn you away, but if you turn Him away He will turn you away. That would be the most tragic experience of your life and you would be separated from Him forever, even in a very real place called hell. It is not God's will that anyone would go there, so turn to Him now without delay.

Yes, you can go to heaven from Antarctica or from anywhere else on earth. Heaven is the most wonderful place anyone could ever imagine. In heaven we will be with Jesus our Savior and Lord, our Messiah, and closest friend for all eternity and with all those who have trusted in Him. The Bible assures us that in heaven : "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

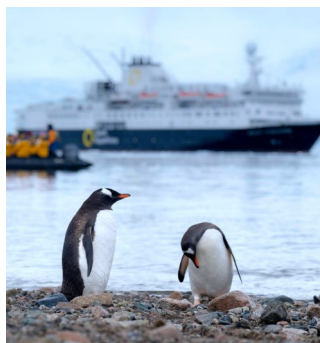
What must I do to be sure I will be in heaven someday? Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. "Prepare to meet your God." (Amos 4:12)

HOW CAN I PREPARE TODAY TO BE IN HEAVEN SOMEDAY?

1. **REALIZE** that God loves you and wants you to be in His family. He loved you enough to send Jesus to the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) You had a debt you could not pay. He paid a debt He did not owe.
2. **RECOGNIZE** that you need His forgiveness for your sins. "Behold, the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29) Admit that you have sinned before God and have broken His commandments. If you ask Him to forgive you He will.
3. **REPENT** of your sins and turn away from them. "Except you repent, you will all perish." (Luke 13:3) Genuine faith will result in genuine repentance. Don't just be sorry about your sins, be sorry enough to quit and go in a new direction in life.
4. **RECEIVE** Jesus Christ into your life by faith. "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

Do you really want to go to heaven someday? Turn to Jesus Christ right now. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins. Tell Him you are willing to repent and trust in Him as your Savior and Lord. Open your heart and ask Jesus to come into your life and to give you eternal life. When you sincerely do this your life will take on new meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. You will begin to experience a new life in Christ with real love, joy, peace, and the assurance that you will be in heaven someday.

This is how you can get to heaven from Antarctica.



*If I can help you understand anything I have written,
I would be delighted to talk with you. I desire to
serve you, and that is the mission God has called
me to fulfill. Let's talk so we can learn some
valuable life lessons from one another.*

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