

Getting It Right to Get Right into Heaven

I live in a world of words. College football rivalries have nothing on a room full of grammarians and wordsmiths. I would propose a large wrestling pit of mashed potatoes for English instructors to settle their differences over the Oxford comma.

Let's see where you fall. Which of the following is correct?

1. Jesus had an inner circle of three men.
 2. Jesus had an inner circle of 3 men.
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1. Jesus's inner circle saw things the other disciples did not.
 2. Jesus' inner circle saw things the other disciples did not.
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1. Jesus has an inner circle that included Peter, James, and John.
 2. Jesus has an inner circle that included Peter, James and John.

If you chose #1, you follow the Chicago Manual of Style. If you chose #2, you follow AP Style.

Since you're wondering, I follow Chicago. That's our go-to style manual for publishing at Lifeway Christian Resources. I have followed it for so long that I cringe when I read a book that follows some other (i.e., primitive, Neanderthal) style of composition.

I cringe, but I'm still able to read it and understand it. I read a lot of tweets and social media posts that would have gotten me kicked out of Mrs. Thomas's ninth-grade English class, but I'm still able to read and understand them. And every hipster "influencer" on Instagram would ask, "Isn't that the point?"

I'll admit that, yes, the main point is to be understood. We use words to be understood, so what does it matter if I dangle my participles or use

atrocious spelling? If you understood what I was communicating, I've succeeded.

So, I will cling to my Oxford comma, pity those who think otherwise, and let sleeping dogs lay ... er, lie.

Going to heaven is not like that. A lot of people think that entrance into heaven is inclusive of all people regardless of what they did or didn't do to get there. English teachers don't give participation trophies to students who just showed up but did nothing that was required—and God doesn't give participation trophies either. Don't assume that God will ease up on His requirements because you were sincere in whatever you believed or didn't believe.

Entrance into heaven is simple. Only one thing is required: Righteousness with no sin in the mix. Simple enough, but beyond your ability. As Scripture clearly points out:

"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10).

Thankfully, God Himself stepped in. Jesus Christ took your unrighteousness upon Himself and nailed it to the cross. Through His death, He forgave your sin, removed it, and gave you His righteousness instead.

"He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

No religion, no philosophy, no "turning over a new leaf" can do that for you. Only Jesus.

There may be many ways to structure a sentence, but there's only way to enter heaven: faith in Jesus.