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ONLY VETERANS WILL BE IN HEAVEN

This may seem like a strange phrase to use, but this idea came to me as I was thinking about America's military service on Veterans Day. There are many similarities between a soldier's life and the life of a Christian (II Tim. 2:3-4). Let's study these similarities together so that we can also come to the conclusion: "Only veterans of the King's army will be in Heaven." To understand this language, we must first recognize that there is a war raging across our world. The kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of the Earth are at war (Eph. 6:10-13). Jesus is leading one spiritual army, and Satan is leading another. This warfare is not seen in a physical conflict like wars on Earth, but this war is a spiritual one fighting against unholy imaginations (II Cor. 10:3-6). Losing this war will not merely cost your life or freedom, but it will cost your

soul for eternity (Rev. 20:12-15)! We must join the winning side, and Christ shows us who wins the war in the book of Revelation. It is King Jesus who rides the white horse of victory (Rev. 19:11-15)! Not only is there a war raging between two sides, but we can only be on one of the two sides in this war. In Earth wars, some are pacifists, but in this spiritual war, there are no pacifists. Christ said, "*He that is not with me is against me...*" (Matt. 12:30). To be on His side, we find that Christ will only take people who want to enlist and be devoted to His army (II Tim. 2:4; Rev. 22:18). On the other hand, Satan will draft and force military service on anyone that he finds (I Pet. 5:8). He does not mind if you are not fully devoted to his cause yet, and many have been taken into his army (Matt. 7:13). We must decide to serve in

Jesus' army by being baptized, or we are doomed to lose the war. To be considered a veteran, we must complete our service in good honor. All of those veterans that we recognize on November 11 served their country and were discharged with an honorable ranking. It is the same for the army of Christ. We cannot shirk our duties or go AWOL and expect to be called a veteran when returning home. Those individuals are generally called criminals rather than veterans because they broke the oath they made. As soldiers in the army of Christ, we cannot shirk our duties and leave our post with the expectation of being a veteran in Heaven (II Tim. 2:3-4). When we sin and break our vow to Christ, He dishonorably discharges us from His army because He will not tolerate disobedience (Heb. 3:12; Gal. 5:4). This is why Christians must live their entire lives following Christ and keep up their endurance. When we are baptized into His name and follow Him faithfully, we can become veterans of His army at the end of our life on Earth. At the end of time, Christ will welcome His veterans home, and we can be honorably discharged into Heaven, our home. This year, several

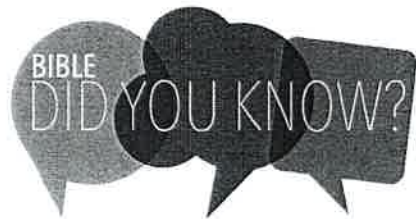
spiritual veterans have ended their active service on Earth and crossed into their spiritual rest in Paradise (Lk. 16:19-31). If we want to join them and win this war, we need to take courage and serve Christ until the end (Rev. 2:10)! - Aaron Jacobs

As we grow in our thinking and faith, our questions on spiritual topics grow deeper. One question to ponder on is: What is God's goal with the gospel? I believe it's a question that demands our attention. "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*" (Rom. 1:16). Is God seeking to change men with the gospel so we can have "heaven on earth"? Does God want us to obey to enhance the quality of our communities, the togetherness of our country, and the peace in the home? Or is God's purpose greater or higher? As children of God, we need to be concerned and focused on the things of God. We need to be aware and deeply invested in what God wants for us and for mankind. Our opinions and preferences on this matter won't work. I believe that peace and togetherness are a "side-effect" of following God. But is this what God is seeking to accomplish with His

gospel? Is this God's primary goal? We're aware of the turmoil going on in the United States today. There are riots. There is division and hatred due to race and politics. Some of this has seeped into the Lord's church. Sometimes we may look at this and say: "If people just followed Christ's teaching, then wars and division would end, and we'd all get along." This is true, but is that the end of the story? Is this why we preach Christ? Psalm 2:1-3 says the nations are in an uproar and the people plot in vain. The kings of the Earth gather together against the LORD and His Anointed. This battle against good and evil has been waged since sin entered the world in Genesis 3. This battle will continue until Christ returns. The question remains: What is God seeking to accomplish in the gospel? I'd like to suggest three things found in Scripture. God wants us to be reconciled to Him (Rom. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:19-20). The word reconciled means to be restored to friendly terms. Sin destroyed our friendship with God and made us His enemies (Isa. 59:1-2). But *"God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son"* (Jn. 3:16). This is the simple message of reconciliation that still applies

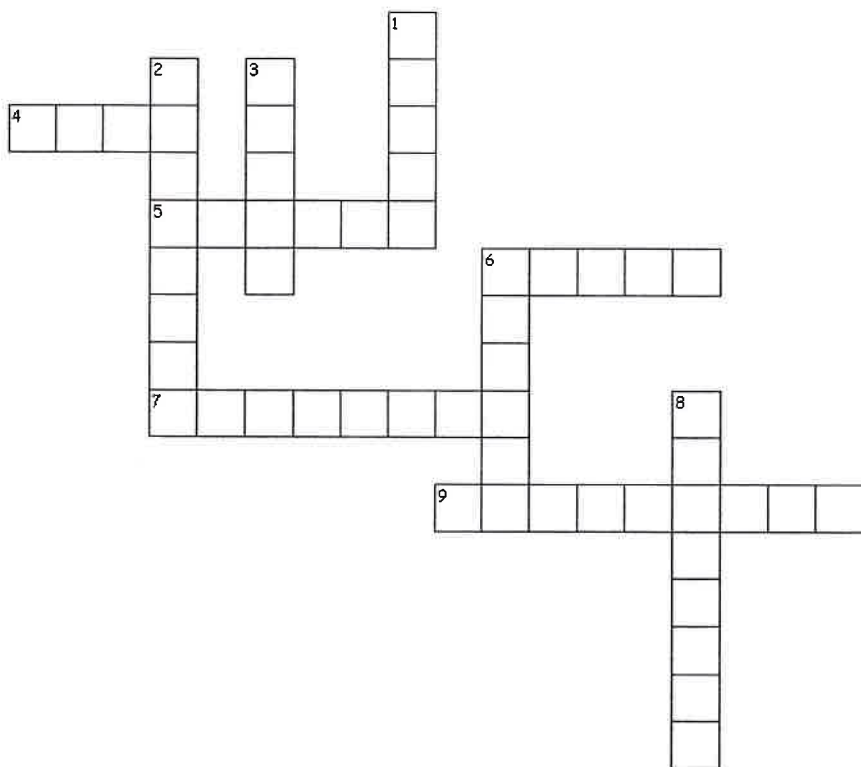
today. If you're the world's greatest philanthropist but not reconciled to God by the gospel, then it's all for naught. If you have the most conservative political opinions in the world, but you're not reconciled to God through the gospel, then it won't matter in the end. You'll be separated from God on Earth and will face your final destruction on Judgment Day. If you're the biggest civil rights speaker that has graced the planet and you aren't reconciled to God through the gospel, then it won't matter in the end on Judgment Day. These things aren't bad in themselves. But if we focus on these earthly matters apart from God's purposes and goals, we're making a grave mistake with eternal consequences.

-Jordan Lawson



"Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?"
Eccl. 7:16-17

The ULTIMATE CRSSWORD



ACROSS

4. After denying Jesus, Peter began to _____ (Mk. 14:72).
5. Jesus was forced to wear a painful crown of _____ (Mk. 15:17).
6. _____ followed Jesus at a distance into the courtyard (Mk. 14:54).
7. Jesus was crucified here, which means, "Place of a skull" (Mk. 15:22).
9. He became a believer in Jesus from watching Him die (Mk. 15:39).

DOWN

1. He betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Mk. 14:43-46).
2. The soldiers holding Jesus in custody were _____ on Him (Mk. 15:19).
3. The father of Alexander and Rufus was forced to bear the cross (Mk. 15:21).
6. _____ offered to release Jesus from execution (Mk. 15:9-10).
8. The crowd demanded Pilate to release _____ instead of Jesus (Mk. 15:7-15).