



I must have flown the Atlantic about thirty times and I'd never had a serious problem until one particular flight I made from Los Angeles to London several years ago.

I was travelling with my wife and two friends, and we turned up at Los Angeles International Airport in plenty of time for the 7.30 p.m. flight to London's Heathrow. We walked up to the check-in desk with no concerns—after all, we had the tickets, we were in time, so what could go wrong? But our peace of mind was quickly shattered.

The United Airlines official was very polite, but she said, 'I'm sorry, sir, but these tickets are not valid for this flight.'

I looked at her in amazement. Of course they were valid. She must have been making a mistake. But she then pointed out to me that the departure time on my tickets was 12:35, not 7:30! I was shocked. I'm not stupid; surely I could never have made a mistake like that! But I had made a very serious mistake. The flight we were booked on had gone several hours earlier.

I'm normally very organized and usually check details several times. How could I have made a mistake like that? The time of departure was very clear on the ticket, and, later, when I looked in my diary, I had written 12:35 as the time to leave. So why had I got it into my head that we were due to leave at 7:30? Why didn't I look at the tickets? Why did I assume I knew the correct time when clearly I did not?

United Airlines did what they could, but the 7:30 flight was fully booked. All they could do was to put us on standby: we could only have seats if someone else did not turn up. Standby gives you no guarantees, and you don't know until just before take-off whether they have room for you or not. I didn't like the stress of

that situation at all. Fortunately there was room, and eventually we got home.

## Check the details

This whole sorry episode shows us how important it is that, when an important journey is coming up, we should assume nothing and check the details.

There is a journey each one of us must make that is more important than any other. This is the journey from life, via death, to God and eternity. Jesus said that for that journey, many people will check in full of confidence that everything is all right. They will come boldly to God. They will speak enthusiastically of all their qualifications for being accepted by God, but they will be told that there is no room for them. What they assume is enough to get them to heaven will be shown to be totally inadequate.

## Will you be like that?

Are you one of those who assume they will be acceptable to God? Do you think you've done enough to get to heaven? If so, check the details.

## God's requirements

God says no one who has sinned in any way will get to heaven, and the Bible makes it very clear that every one of us has sinned. So what hope do we have? The gospel offers us forgiveness of sins through what Jesus did for us on the cross. It offers us a new start, but we must be born again.

Do you think these details are irrelevant?

Do you think that being saved and born again does not apply to you? Do you know better than God does? Are you assuming that you will be all right as long as you have tried your best? After all, surely God can't expect more than that!

But God does expect more than that. He expects you to conform to his standards, and all other assumptions, no matter how genuinely you may hold them, will not be accepted.

## Don't 'miss the flight'

The details on my ticket were clear enough, I just ignored them. God's requirements for heaven are much

clearer, and we dare not ignore them. If we do, there's no second chance. There are no standby seats for heaven. You must have a booked seat, fully paid for and reserved in your name.

Jesus is the only one who can make us acceptable to God. Forget any other ideas. They are worthless. Trust only in what God has done for you in and through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus takes care of getting you to heaven, there are no mistakes. There are no unforeseen problems. There is no possibility of you 'missing the flight'.

All this is offered to us in the gospel.

The guarantee Jesus gives in the gospel is this:

Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 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 14:1-3).



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