

WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE? (2)

Who Will Be In Heaven?

Last Sunday we presented a lesson designed to describe what heaven will be like. We noted that it is a very real place and also some of the descriptions of what it will be like – an eternal place that is described as Paradise (i.e. a beautiful and perfect park), a place BETTER than anything we find in this world, a place of rest and peace, and where there will be no more sickness, dying, tears or even disappointments. My goal was in some small way make heaven a place we desire to go when this life is over. A place that when we face discouragement, disappointments, and frustration, we can anticipate receiving and as such we will SET OUR MIND on getting there (Colossians 3:1-2).

Today, I want to talk about another aspect of heaven – WHO will be there. This ought to be one of the greatest motivators to us.

I. God in heaven

- a. Clearly God is in heaven – Matthew 5:16, 6:9 – as Jesus taught us to pray; Isaiah 63:15 – describes it as His habitation.
- b. Jesus is in heaven – Luke 24:51 notes that Jesus was carried up into heaven (cf. Acts 1:9-11)
Ephesians 1:20 – God raised Jesus and seated Him at His right hand;
Hebrews 8:1, He is our High Priest, seated at the right hand of God.
Probably the most common description of Jesus now in heaven is that He is seated at the right hand of God and now reigning. Of course, Christians have no problem accepting that is where Jesus is.
- c. The Holy Spirit is in heaven – John 1:32, 1 Peter 1:12 – the gospel was sent from heaven by the Holy Spirit: Revelation 1:4 mentions the 7 Spirits who are before the throne.
Revelation 22:17 puts Him with Christ, the bride.
- d. There is something to be said about being in the presence of our Creator and God. Knowing that finally we will get to see Him face to face and not only that but to welcomed into His presence to dwell with God for all of eternity.
Jesus used that as a source of hope as He spoke to His apostles in John 14:1-3;
1 Thessalonians 4:17 speaks of the Lord's return and how we (the saved) will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." NOTE also vs. 18, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

II. The Heroes of Faith

- a. Everybody needs heroes. Most of us have someone we look up to as a hero – someone who inspires us to be better. As Christians, it is certainly my hope that such is how we view our Lord.
- b. But throughout the Bible we read of many godly individuals who lived for God and we have every reason to believe they will be in heaven, when they day comes. Some of these individuals include:
 - i. Enoch – Genesis 5:21-24, Hebrews 11:5 – a man prior to the flood who walked with God and did not see death because God took him.
 - ii. Abraham – Genesis 12:1-3, mentioned more than 250 times in the Bible, with more than 75 times in the New Testament. He is described as the ultimate example of faith. We, the saved, are called, "sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7)
 - iii. Noah – who by faith built an ark, saving only himself and his family of 8 (Genesis 6-8, Hebrews 11:7).
 - iv. Joseph, son of Jacob (Genesis 30-50) – became a great deliverer for the descendants of Israel.

- v. Moses – who gave the Law to the children of Israel and faithfully led God’s nation for 40 years, which were not always easy.
- vi. Joshua - who led the conquest of the land. 1 of only 2 out of 12 spies who by faith was ready to obey God to take the land of Canaan the first time. His dying declaration was that we choose who we are to serve, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)
- vii. Samuel the prophet – mentioned in Hebrews 11:32 for his faith. He did many good things for the children of Israel in the name of God, including anointing Israel’s first 2 kings.
- viii. David – a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22, 1 Samuel 13:14) and establisher of the throne that our Lord reigns upon in heaven, even now. He made some major blunders during his life, but we have every confidence to believe he is among the saved who will be there in heaven.
- ix. Elijah and the faithful prophets – Elijah, was carried up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2). He did not see death, a testament to his faithfulness.
- x. The apostles – except Judas Iscariot – they are the foundation of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14), and built the church. We read of many of their works throughout the New Testament, including the martyred death of some.
- xi. Paul – God’s apostle “out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). Paul brought the message of the gospel to the Gentiles, preaching a message of unity for ALL men, both Jew and Gentile alike – the very premise of the gospel (Romans 1:16)
- xii. Men like Timothy, Luke, Epaphroditus (Philippi), Barnabas, John Mark his nephew, Stephen who was stoned to death for preaching the truth, and so many others – men about whom we have limited knowledge, but we know enough to have confidence concerning their eternal destiny.
- xiii. Women like Mary the mother of Jesus, who faithfully submitted to God to bring our Savior into the world, the other Marys who ministered to Jesus and other disciples, Lois and Eunice (Timothy’s grandmother and mother – 2 Timothy 1:5), Esther – who delivered Israel from destruction by trusting God, Jochebed (Moses’ mother) – who by faith hid Moses, and raised him in Egypt, Ruth and Naomi – a faithful mother and her daughter-in-law – Ruth is mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:5) – she is the grandmother of David, and so many other faithful women. In God’s eyes, there is neither “male nor female...” (Galatians 3:27-28, 1 Timothy 2:15 speaks specifically of the woman’s salvation by fulfilling her role before God).
- xiv. Cornelius and other Gentiles – Acts 10 records the conversion of Cornelius and his household – he is the first full Gentile recorded to obey the gospel. Again, I appeal to Galatians 3:27-28 – there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile).
- xv. Faithful martyrs who loved not their lives to the death – Revelation 12:11. There is a scene in that book about these martyrs who faithfully served God to the point of dying and are now crying for justice from God – He has granted it.
- xvi. You may know of others who you believe died faithfully serving God. We have hope to be with them and possibly see them again when this life is over. Consider 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 where Paul addresses those who “have fallen asleep.” We do not sorrow as those who have no hope.

Godly men and women still speak to us (cf. Hebrews 11:4).

- c. NOTE: I do not have a definitive answer for how these lived their lives and how they died. But BASED upon God’s word, I have every reason to believe they are safely with God and His people. I know for certain about a few – Moses and Elijah (we see them conversing with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration) and Enoch (who did not see death), and even Paul and Peter, based on their final

letters as they neared the end of their lives we know they didn't quit. But the rest, we just learn from what is written about them, those who pleased God and He takes note.

- d. Why provide such a list? When we become discouraged and seek to give up, or think we are alone in serving God, know better. Pick up God's word and read about your heroes and what they went through. Likely, some of them endured much more than what we face today. Consider Romans 15:4 – it is written for our learning to give us hope.

III. Also in heaven

- a. **Heavenly beings** – in addition to the Triune God, we also read of various angelic being who are there. This lesson will not study about angels, but we simply note they are God's messengers, "ministering spirits" sent to care for those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:7, 14). Mark 8:38 notes that when Jesus returns holy angels will be with Him.
- b. **Infants and little children** – who die will be safe in God's eyes. They have never sinned because they do not even know what sin is. If those who are lost are so because of their own sins (which is what the Bible teaches – Romans 3:23, 6:23), then one incapable of sinning cannot be lost. That describes a baby. Consider Luke 18:16-17 where Jesus said, *But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."* Also Matthew 18:3, and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* 2 Samuel 12:22-23, after David's infant child dies he replies, *"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."*
- c. **Those incapable of sinning** – i.e. the mentally challenged – there are many who are mentally incapable of sinning, who never have and will never have the ability to comprehend sin and salvation. The Bible does not deal with this directly (at least to my knowledge). But I do believe they are safe. If sin is an act done by one who knows what sin is (again Romans 6:23), and the lost are those who by their actions set themselves at enmity with God (and thus need forgiveness), then such are as safe in the arms of God as infants and little children. This is consistent with God being just and righteous.

IV. What about us?

- a. The New Testament is book written by Christians for Christians. While a major purpose is to convince the world WHY they need Jesus and to be saved, so much of it is written to the saved – those with a hope of heaven when this life is over, and how to ensure that you will be there. Last week we talked about heirs and their inheritance as a source of hope.
- b. **Is your name in the book of life?** – cf. Revelation 20:12-15, Philippians 4:3 – Paul described his fellow workers. None will be there by mistake and none will be excluded by mistake. Another way of saying this is to say that you are saved and that you stay saved.
- c. So many passages describe how we can get there and that is what we want to devote the remainder of this lesson to.
 - i. **We need to obey the gospel** – Jesus came to this earth and shed His blood for the remission of our sins (Matthew 26:28, Romans 5:6-9). Since Jesus died for our sins, how do we come in contact with His blood?
We call this the "plan of salvation." We must:
 1. Hear the word – Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing
 2. Believe in Jesus – who He is, why He came, what He did, etc. – John 8:24, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
Romans 10:9-10 points to some of what we must believe.
NOTE: The idea of belief is more than simple mental acknowledgment of existence, it is believing something to the point of responding – cf. Acts 2:37

3. Repent – crucial to becoming a Christian is a realization that you are changing your life. You must renounce your ungodly ways – Acts 17:30-31, 2:38, 3:19 – repent and be converted (return).
 4. Confess Him as Lord and Christ – Romans 10:9-10 – confess the Lord Jesus Christ, cf. Acts 8:37 – the Ethiopian Eunuch
 5. Be immersed – baptized for the remission of your sins. Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, Note Romans 6:3-4 and how this act ties in with the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 6. IF you want to go to heaven, obey the gospel!
- ii. ***We need to remain faithful*** – Revelation 2:10, “Be faithful unto death.”
 Luke 9:62, No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back...
 Hebrews 10:38-39 – if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in them...
 Being a Christian is a lifetime commitment. God EXPECTS us to remain faithful and will reward those who faithfully serve Him.
 NOTE: Revelation 3:5 notes that our name can be blotted out of the book of life (removed). Cf. Galatians 5:4, “You have fallen from grace” – it IS possible.
 - iii. ***We need to live godly lives*** – 2 Peter 1:5-11 – we are continually adding these godly qualities that help us resist and overcome sin. Note esp. vs 10-11.
 Romans 2:7 speaks of those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality.
 - iv. ***We need to fight the good fight, finish the course and keep the faith*** – 2 Timothy 4:7-8. The one who desires to God to heaven is one who will keep working. We are not merely keeping house for the Lord, but fighting the good fight for Him.
 Nowhere in scripture do we see Christianity described as a spectator sport.
 - v. ***Those who have genuinely repented*** – even as Christians, we are going to sin from time to time. To deny this is to lie (cf. 1 John 1:8-10). But we also find in that text, that if we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us. He continues in 1 John 2:1-2
 Acts 8:22, Simon, the magician was told to “repent and pray”.
 - vi. ***We must die in the Lord*** – blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Revelation 14:13.
 Revelation 2:10 again notes, “Be faithful until death...”
 - vii. NOTE: ***These things are not a pick and choose which one list, but a description of who will be in heaven.*** In summary, this is descriptive of the one who becomes a Christian and remains faithful as a Christian to the end. It really is that simple – hard, but simple!

We live in a world filled with people we cannot fully trust. So many live with wicked or selfish intentions. So many manipulate others and do whatever to get what they want. We live in a world filled with immorality and worldliness that does NOT make us any better. We know how messed this world and so many of its inhabitants are. Even our closest friends may let us down (hopefully they will not). Imagine FINALLY being in a place where God and the grand heroes of faith recorded in God’s word. A place filled with those who willfully CHOSE to follow God and the Lord Jesus. A place filled with good people that are seeking what is best as they love both God and their neighbors (Matthew 22:37-39). And YOU can be there too.

But sadly, not everyone will be there. In fact, scripture is pretty clear that most will NOT be saved. This lesson as described those who will be saved and that implies some will not. But I want you to know that God wants you to go to heaven and thus He has given you a plan that you CAN obey. But will you? Think about it! Do you want to go to heaven?