

## The place called heaven

TEXT: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb. 11:13-16)

THESIS: Heaven is surely worth it all.

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The great heroes of the faith earnestly sought that heavenly home and therefore, considered themselves but, “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”
  - a. All indications are that God was extremely pleased with this attitude and response of faith.
  - b. Thus, he was not ashamed to be called or known as their God and had prepared a special place for them.
  - c. And rightly so, for Heaven has often been labeled as, “A prepared place for prepared people.”
2. Yet, the Biblical doctrine of Heaven has never received, from a theological standpoint, the consideration that has been given to the doctrine of Hell and eternal punishment.
  - a. In matters of writings from within and without the brotherhood, we see very little written on Heaven, yet our songbooks are filled with songs about heaven.
    - i. Why is that?
    - ii. What is this place called Heaven?
3. Therefore, let us study and search on this subject together by noticing that,
  - a. Heaven is a real place.
  - b. What will Heaven be like for those who go there?

### DISCUSSION:

- I. HEAVEN IS A REAL PLACE
  - A. When the word, “Heaven” appears in the Bible, it refers, except when it is used figuratively, to one of three realms:
    1. First, to the atmosphere space immediately above us where the birds fly freely.
    2. Second, to the stellar heaven that must ultimately embrace the entirety of the universe.
    3. And third, is the special dwelling place of God himself.
  - B. Now, the atmospheric heavens include the space that immediately surrounds the earth which includes the air that we breathe.
    1. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than

your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:” (Isa. 55:9-10)

2. It is interesting that Jesus showed a distinction in Matt. 6:25-34 of the type of heaven where the birds of heaven are mentioned in the same context with the Heavenly father.

C. Then, let us acknowledge the celestial heavens.

1. Frequently, in both the Old as well as the New Testament, there is a reference to a vast space above our planet.
  - a. “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:” (Gen. 1:14)
  - b. “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:” (Heb. 1:10).
2. The Bible also refers to some fixed stars and constellations.
  - a. Such as Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades (Job 9:9).
  - b. By which the Lord is called the maker of such constellations and their shapes (Amos 5:8).

D. And then we come upon the third heaven which is that special dwelling place of God.

1. Now, the scriptures says, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee . . .” (1 Kgs. 8:27).
2. The Bible also claims that God is omnipresent meaning everywhere at once (Psa. 139).
3. Yet while this is true, still there is a special dwelling place of God which is also called Heaven.
  - a. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15)
  - b. Isaiah went on to says, “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?” (Isa. 63:15)

E. Heaven is the special abode of God and of those closely associated with him.

1. In Deut 26:15 Moses wrote that God looks down from his holy habitation, from Heaven, and saw the Israelites.
2. Therefore, God is the God of heaven (Jonah 1:9) or the Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:45).
3. But, God is not alone in Heaven, for we read of the host of heaven (angels) which worships him (Neh. 9:6).
4. Likewise, believers also may look forward, “To an inheritance

incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for . . .” the faithful (1 Pet. 1:4).

- F. Thus, heaven is the present abode of God and his angels and the ultimate destination of his faithful saints on earth.

## II. BUT, WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE FOR THOSE WHO GO THERE?

### A. First, Heaven is a place of everlasting life.

1. Those who have chosen God are in constant, “hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;” (Tit. 1:2).
  - a. To the faithful Christian, the apostle John tells us, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 Jn. 5:11, 13).
  - b. Also speaking of the judgment, Christ said about the loss that, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matt. 25:46)
2. Now, the best known characteristic of Heaven is that it is a place of everlasting life.
  - a. Yet, it is difficult for mankind to conceive the idea of eternity in any clear fashion.
  - b. And there is the further problem that Christians sometimes compartmentalize Heaven and earth in such a fashion that it is difficult to convince them that God’s future kingdom (2 Pet. 1:3-ff) is but an extension of the kingdom here on earth, which is the church.

### B. Notice these two Problems:

1. First, there is great difficulty to some that are bound by the temporary to define and understand the eternal.
  - a. We are finite creatures and everything about us, including our thinking process are finite meaning limited.
  - b. But, the afterlife has a dimension of the infinite meaning having no limits and therein lies the difficulty in understanding.
  - c. Thus, we often hear people speak of “spending eternity” with God as though one could actually “spend” the spendless.
    - (1) To illustrate this, one preacher speaking on the topic of Hell and its duration said, “If Hell were only a 100 years, I could stand it. After I’d been there one day, I could say, “I have only 99 years, 364 days and I’ll get out of this place.” If it were only a 1, 000 years, I could bear that or even a million years could be bared because that faint glimmering ray of hope would cause me to hold on. But, after a man has been

in Hell a hundred, thousand, million, billion, trillion years, he has no less time to stay because the Bible speaks of everlasting and eternal punishment.

- d. But, just as hell is everlasting and eternal, so is Heaven!
    - (1) Yet, how do you explain the timeless to creatures of time?
    - (2) The closest that anyone has come to a description of eternity is best seen in the last verse of “Amazing Grace” which says, “When we’ve been there 10, 000 years, bright, shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, than when we first begun.”
  - e. You know, the writers of the Bible warned us against putting too much emphasis upon this life.
    - (1) John advised to, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 Jn. 2:15-17)
    - (2) Paul said, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
  - f. Perhaps this is also why Peter expressed the afterlife in essentially negative terms: “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” (1 Pet. 1:4).
    - (1) Peter uses words to describe what heaven is not.
    - (2) Therefore, since we are familiar to words such as corruptible, defile and that which fades away, we are able to appreciate a place where these characteristics are lacking.
2. The second problem is that heaven is seen with reference to our present lives and having the promise of eternal life (1 Jn. 2:25), but not yet having that promise completely filled.
- a. There is a sense of the possession of eternal life for the Christian (1 Jn. 5:11-13) which is conditioned upon one’s faithfulness to “walk in the light” (1 Jn. 1:6-10)
  - b. Therefore, we have a hope for an additional life at the end of this one.
    - (1) But, if this is the only difference between Christians and

unbelievers, then there would be no crucial argument about the immediate present.

- (2) One man so boldly said, “the Christian teaching about everlasting life is not just teaching about the future; it is teaching about the present. . . . For, there is a God up there in the supernatural world along with his angels, and men and women who have lived on earth in past and present that are tied to the natural realm. But, if we conduct ourselves here as we ought, there will eventually be a place for us up there alongside God and his angels. The difference is not that the Christian is always congratulating himself by saying, “Thank God there is something more after all this eating and sleeping, getting ill and dying; thank God there is something else as well as these buildings that will one day crumble and this earth that will one day be burnt to ash!” Rather, this life is different for the believer than for the unbeliever because he is saying to himself, This experience of looking at trees that will die and climbing mountains that will crumble, this experience of loving a wife, and having children who are destined for the grave, **is mixed up with an order of things that cannot pass away.** God’s kingdom is eternal and it penetrates this natural world so that at any moment the leaf of a tree or the light in an eye or the sunset on the hills may speak of its wonder.” **In short, Christians inhabit two world at once which is why the unbeliever’s world is much smaller than his.** In the Christian’s point of view, the unbeliever is imprisoned in a decaying universe and has locked himself in.

3. Christian have a dual citizenship: one that is physically based and another that is spiritually based (Phil. 3:21).
4. Those who understand this, will not put too much emphasis on this life, but rather, on their relationship to Christ and their subsequent membership in his church.

C. So not only will Heaven be a place of everlasting, Heaven is a place of blissful reunion.

1. Many of us have lost someone dear to us who was a faithful Christian.
2. Yet one day, we will be joined to those who have crossed the valley of the shadow of death by which someone else will experience our loss when we pass from this place.
3. Now, if the Bible teaches anything at all about Heaven, it teaches that we shall be united with our loved ones if we have also lived as committed children of God.
  - a. But more than that, we will also be reunited with those whom we



- except for singing forever and ever.
3. Heaven is portrayed as a place of rest.
    - a. Rest as described in the Bible, is not merely a cessation of activities.
    - b. Instead, it refers to reaching a goal of crucial importance.
      - (1) The Hebrew writer penned: “So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?” (Heb. 3:11-18)
      - (2) “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Heb. 4:9-11)
    - c. Rest is also a term used to refer to God’s ceasing of creating activity (Gen. 2:2-3), but this rest is not God ceasing from working in the world.
    - d. So, just as the Father can rest but still work, so his children can do the same.
      - (1) Interestingly, the Sabbath day was a pattern after God’s rest on the seventh day (Exo. 20:8-11).
      - (2) But, the Sabbath day was a day of incredible activity.
        - (a) It was just a different type of activity from the other 6 days of the week.
    - e. Therefore, heavenly rest should not be seen as just taking a siesta for all eternity.
  4. Second, Heaven is a place of joyous worship
    - a. Who would be there that would not long with eager anticipation to join the people who worship God continually around his very throne (Isa 6; Rev. 4-5, 19)?
  5. Third, Heaven is a place of wonderful reaping.
    - a. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man

soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:7-9)

- b. And it will also be a place of rejoicing.
    - (1) For, “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” (Matt. 25:21)
- F. Heaven is a place of indescribable beauty.
1. John Penned, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” (Rev. 21:1)
    - a. If all is rendered useless and all material things are swept away, the grand future is a spiritual estate.
  2. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2:9-10)
    - a. Now, this passage refers primarily to the blessings of the Christian life in connection with the wonderful message God has given us in his word.
    - b. But, God has prepared something special for Christians which is why Paul proclaimed that, “we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Rom. 8:24-25)
  3. And, heaven is a place where God is infinite in knowledge, presence, mercy and where all true power rests with his illimitable (unlimited) love, by showing us the lamb standing as though He had never been slain.
  4. Furthermore, the perfection of Heaven’s beauty contains no flaws.
    - a. But, we have nothing to compare to Heaven, by which we cannot understand it’s beauty.
    - b. Yet, we can imagine Heaven’s glory as being described as pure gold, with pearly gates, and jeweled foundations
    - c. However we must remember that earthly things are used in order to communicate a hint of the beauty because in the spiritual world, all things will be made new.
    - d. Thus, we can be absolutely certain that in our spirit self, we will thrill to the joys of heaven even more than a mortal would delight in the midst of transparent gold, sparkling diamonds, dazzling jasper, smooth pearls and a translucent robe and a golden diadem set with precious stones.

- e. Where the city walls are great and high and the city is four square.
- f. There will be no temple there because it is all temple and therefore, beautiful.
- g. There is no sun, moon nor stars, yet we will walk in heavenly sunlight because the glory of God is light.
- h. And, the gates of the city are never shut by which the saints in glory go in and out of the city of God which is the new heaven and new earth meaning that they have full access to the universe created for them.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. It is impossible to adequately discuss Heaven nor can one exhaust the everlasting subject of Heaven.
  - a. One man said, “When considering the promises of rewards, our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambitions when infinite joy is offered to us. Alas like a ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies, he cannot imagine outside of himself what is meant by an everlasting reward and so he continues with his mud pies. We are far too easily pleased.”
  - b. The Bible makes it clear that we will stand before him and shall be inspected.
    - i. But, will we actually survive that examination?
    - ii. Will we find approval, shall we please God?
    - iii. Will we one day be an ingredient in the divine happiness and to be loved by God forevermore?
2. John reminded us, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 Jn. 3:1-3)
3. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2 Pet. 3:13)
  - a. You see, we look for it, yearn for it, and pray for it.
    - i. The spirit of the righteous groan within themselves, longing to put off the tabernacle of flesh and to put on their robes of righteousness.
  - b. The Spirit informs us through the word that when Christ appear, that our new city shall appear as well.
4. For now, the whole creation groans crying out for its own destruction.
  - a. But one day, maybe today, God will stand no more of the world’s iniquity and the sharp sickle of God will be put forth and the vintage of this world will be reaped.
5. The hymns we sing about heaven are very familiar and dear to the Christian’s heart because it reminds them of God’s dwelling place and how they long to be there with him!