

BECOMING HEAVENLY MINDED

- A. Introduction: Col 3:1,2--Risen, then, with Christ, you must lift your thoughts above, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God. You must be heavenly-minded, not earthly minded. (Knox)
1. There are many important points in this verse that we could address. But, for this series of lessons we want to focus on one point.
 - a. Christians are told to seek the things of heaven and to keep our minds focused on heaven.
 1. Heaven is the place where God dwells and the place where Christians go when they die.
 2. Seek, in the Greek (ZETEO), implies and active, single-minded investigation, an ongoing process. This same word is used in verses such as Matt 6:33; Luke 15:8; Luke 19:10, etc.
 - b. Obviously, if the Bible says to keep our minds focused on heaven, we need to do it. But, what does that mean and how do we do it?
 1. Many, many Christians have very little information about heaven and, or, what they do know about heaven is misinformation -- both of which make it difficult for them to obey this verse.
 2. Lack of information combined with misinformation about heaven has robbed us of what ought to be one of the greatest sources of encouragement for us. We are going to heaven!!
 2. Although most of us probably don't want to admit it, and we feel guilty about it, we just aren't that excited about going to heaven when we die.
 - a. If we are brutally honest, for most of us, the greatest attraction of Heaven is that it's not hell!
 1. Who really wants to live forever as a disembodied spirit among the clouds -- even if our cloud has a mansion and a street paved with gold on it?
 2. And, as much as we may like church, who really wants to spend eternity at one long church service singing and playing a harp?
 3. Added to that, who really wants to leave this beautiful earth behind? Yes, we'll be glad to be rid of the hardships and troubles of this life, but we struggle with the thought of never seeing another sunrise, never sitting by a stream and dangling our feet in the water, never eating another pizza!
 - b. All of these ideas (which are quite common) are based on misinformation which we want to clear up in this next series of lessons.
 3. On top of that, who really wants to spend a lot of time thinking about heaven? It seems so wispy and ethereal -- unrelated to the problems and challenges of everyday life. Lest you think this series won't be that helpful to you right now because you have immediate and pressing problems which must be dealt with, consider these points.
 - a. Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the "faith hall of fame" because it makes reference to men and women in the Old Testament who did exploits and won great victories through faith. v33,34; etc.
 1. In addition to listing the exploits of these people, Hebrews 11 gives us insight into their mindset as they journeyed through this life. Their minds were set on heaven!
 2. Heb 11:13-16--The word seek is a form of ZETEO (earnestly desire; crave). v14,15,16--And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own ... They were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them. (New Living)
 - b. There are many aspects to the kind of faith that accesses the provision and power of the kingdom of God, but a vital element is learning to see the events and challenges of this life from the standpoint of heaven.
 1. Fear and worry are a major hindrance to the kind of faith that produces definitive results.
 2. But, if you learn to see things from the standpoint of heaven, it will lighten the load of this life, remove fear and worry, and put you in a better position to hear wisdom for your current situations.
 4. In this series of lessons we are going to talk about where heaven is, what heaven is like, why you can

be excited about going to heaven, and how you can be heavenly minded. We'll cover these themes:

- a. We mistakenly speak of life after this life as the afterlife. That is a mistake. This life is the pre-life. The greater and better part of our life will be in heaven. We will not lose anything by going to heaven. We will gain. Phil 1:21
- b. Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things -- many of the same things we currently do on earth. Heaven has physical properties to it.
- c. Right now, heaven and earth are separated, but they will one day be joined together and we will live with the Lord on this earth -- earth as God created it to be, a perfect world.

B. Heaven is the realm where God and His angels dwell. Although God is omnipresent (present everywhere at once), He also has a home called heaven. Deut 26:15; I Kings 8:30; Ps 14:2; Ps 33:13; Ps 102:19; Matt 18:10; Matt 28:2; etc.

1. This realm, heaven, is normally not visible to men on earth. Because heaven is the home of God and His angels and is presently invisible to us, it seems wispy, ethereal, and unreal to us. But heaven is a place -- a real place.
 - a. We have a number of accounts in the Bible where the "veil" that separates the invisible from the visible was pulled back. Luke 2:9-15; II Kings 6:17; Matt 17:3
 1. In each of these cases the invisible did not suddenly come into existence the moment it became visible to people and it did not suddenly cease to exist when it was no longer visible. It was there all along.
 2. Scientists at a number of major universities including Yale, Princeton, and Stanford have proposed the hypothesis (a hypothesis is something not proved but assumed to be true for the purposes of argument or further study or investigation) that there are ten unobservable dimensions and likely and infinite number of imperceptible universes.
 - b. Jesus Himself told us that when He left this earth He was going to a place called heaven to prepare or make ready a home, for us.
 1. John 14:2,3--In My Father's house there are many dwellings (20th Cent)...and though I do go away, to prepare you a home (Knox) I'll come again and take you home with me (Beck) so that you may be where I am (Norlie).
 2. Place in the Greek is TOPOS. We get our word topography (the study of particular places) from it. It means a region, a locality, a location. Place in the dictionary means a location in space.
2. Even though heaven is the home of God and His angels and even though heaven is invisible to us at this point in our existence, it clearly has physical properties to it
 - a. Jesus is living there in His physical body, the same body He walked on earth in, the same body that was raised from the dead. His body can be seen and touched. He has flesh and bones. He can talk, walk, and eat. Luke 24:13-15; 39-43
 - b. Acts 7:55,56--Stephen, while he was being stoned to death, saw Jesus in His resurrection body standing at the right hand of God (the throne of God--Heb 1:3). Jesus was not floating, He was standing by a throne which indicates a real place that exists in our space, time universe.
 - c. Matt 17:1-3; Luke 9:30,31--Before His crucifixion Jesus took Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain and was transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah became visible to the disciples, talking with Jesus about the upcoming crucifixion in Jerusalem.
 1. Moses, who had been dead or separated from his physical body for centuries (Deut 34:5,6), was fully visible, fully recognizable, fully able to talk with Jesus and Elijah. The disciples could see and hear them.
 2. Elijah was there in his physical body. Elijah never died but was caught up in a whirlwind and taken to heaven in his body (II Kings 2:11). In other words, a man with a non-resurrection body is living in heaven.

- d. Elijah is not the only person we know of who currently lives in heaven with a physical body. Enoch was also taken to heaven and lives there in a physical body. Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5
 - e. II Cor 12:1-4--When Paul was taken to heaven it was so real that he couldn't tell if he was in his body or out of his body.
 - f. Rev 4:1; 10:9,10--When John was caught up into heaven he had a body. He grasped, held, ate, and tasted things there. The angel referred to John's belly and John's mouth.
3. At physical death the inward man and the outward man separate. The outward man goes into the ground and the inward man (soul and spirit) goes to be with the Lord in heaven (if the person is a Christian).
- a. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus talked about two men who died at the same time -- Lazarus the beggar and a rich man -- and through His words Jesus gives us a look at some aspects of this place that is currently beyond the perception of our physical senses.
 - 1. Jesus is clearly referring to real people in this parable. This is the only parable Jesus told where He gave a name to someone in the story.
 - 2. Naming the beggar Lazarus when Jesus had a friend named Lazarus suggests a real person. Why use that name when it could be confusing unless that was actually the man's name?
 - b. After these men left their physical bodies they still looked like themselves. They were still recognizable and recognized each other and the people who had gone before them.
 - 1. They still had thoughts, feelings, and memories of the life and the people they left behind.
 - 2. In v25 we are told how Lazarus the beggar felt about being where he was. He was comforted. Comforted comes from a word that means to make glad, to be glad, to rejoice.
4. The point for our discussion is that the invisible heaven is not wispy and ethereal. In each of these examples we have considered, the people in heaven are not ghostly and transparent. They don't float around. They stand, they walk, they talk, they remember -- in a realm that, even though it is invisible to us now, has a physicality, a reality, to it.
- C. God made man for sonship, relationship, fellowship (Eph 1:4,5; etc., etc.). God's intention was and is to dwell with men. (Whole lesson for another night.)
- 1. The Bible begins and ends with God on earth with His people (Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3). Earth before sin occurred gives us a picture of the home God planned for Himself and His family.
 - a. Gen 2:8 tells us that God placed the first man, Adam and his wife, Eve, in a garden called Eden.
 - b. According to Gen 2 it was a beautiful place of full provision. There were trees, plants, and animals. There were rivers, gold and minerals, and food. There was interaction with each other and with God. There was meaningful work. In the midst of the garden of Eden was the tree of life (v9).
 - 2. After Adam and Eve sinned they were driven out of Eden and away from the tree of life. Gen 3:24
 - a. Eden or paradise was not destroyed but man could no longer live there because of sin. Man was cut off from access to Eden and access to the tree of life. Notice, the way to the tree was guarded by Cherubim.
 - b. Eden didn't cease to exist. It remained and remains a real place with physicality. But, at some point, it became invisible, imperceptible, to man. Rev 2:7 tells us that the tree of life is currently in paradise or heaven. II Kings 19:15; Ps 80:1; I Sam 4:4; etc., tell us that God is currently enthroned between Cherubim.
 - 3. The word paradise is used three times in the New Testament to mean the place where those who have died in Christ dwell. II Cor 12:4; Luke 24:43; Rev 2:7
 - a. The word translated paradise is PARADEISOS which comes from a Persian word meaning a "walled park" or an "enclosed garden". The word was used to describe the royal gardens of King Cyrus of Persia.
 - b. In the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament) the Greek word PARADEISOS is

used for the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8; Ezek 28:13). According to Strong's Concordance the word paradise means a park, an Eden.

- c. Eden will one day return to earth (later lessons) and man, through faith in Christ, can now live in Eden in the present, invisible heaven.
 4. What is the invisible heaven like? The physical, material realm reveals some things about heaven. The physical, material creation is based on a pattern of heavenly things. Rom 1:20
 - a. When God told Moses to build the Tabernacle God showed Moses a pattern that he was to use. Ex 25:40; 26:30; 27:8; Num 8:4; Acts 7:44
 - b. The New Testament tells us that God showed Moses the Tabernacle in heaven. There is a temple in heaven after which the earthly tabernacle and temple were patterned.
 1. Heb 8:5--...When Moses was getting ready to build the tabernacle God warned him to follow exactly the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle as shown to him on Mount Sinai. (Living Bible)
 2. Heb 8:5--These men are serving what is only a pattern or reproduction of things that exist in Heaven. (Phillips); They officiate in a sanctuary that is a mere copy and shadow of the heavenly one. (Williams)
 3. Heb 9:23--That is why the sacred tent down here on earth and everything in it -- all copied from things in heaven -- all had to be made pure by Moses in this way. (Living Bible)
 5. When John was given the information he recorded in the Book of Revelation he was taken to heaven where he saw the temple and many other things we see here on earth. Rev 7:15; 11:19; 15:5,6
 - a. Rev 4:4,10,11--John saw a throne in Heaven and he saw people with clothes, sitting, then falling down, throwing crowns which had been on their heads. He saw people worshipping and talking.
 - b. Rev 7:9,10--John saw people of clearly different nationalities, wearing clothes, holding palm branches, crying out praise to God.
 - c. Rev 7:13-17--John talked with one of the elders who explained who the multitudes were. Obviously, he could see, talk, reason, remember, recognize, etc.
 - d. John saw creatures in heaven. Rev 5:13--Creature means a live thing. Elsewhere in the New Testament it refers to animals (Heb 13:11; II Pet 2:12; Jude 10). John described Jesus and His saints as coming out of heaven, out of the invisible into the visible, on horses (Rev 19:11,14).
 6. The invisible heaven is a real place with real people doing real things. It has a physicality to it. People who currently live there are no less real than when they lived on this earth.
- D. Conclusion: We have barely scratched the surface of the things we want to discuss in the upcoming weeks. Consider one thought as we close. Col 3:1,2 instructs us to set our mind on heaven. If you have an accurate picture from the Bible of what heaven is, an accurate picture of what is ahead for those who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you'll have no trouble fixing your thoughts on heaven.