

HEAVEN ON EARTH

- A. Introduction: Heaven is the home of God and His angels and the place where Christians go when they die.
1. 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)
 - a. For many, if not most Christians, keeping our minds on heaven is difficult because we either have little or no information about heaven or what we do know is based on misinformation.
 - b. As a result, Christians are robbed of one of the greatest sources of encouragement and hope available to us as we face the hardships of life. We are going to heaven!!
 - c. If you have an accurate picture from the Bible of what heaven is, of what is ahead for those who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you'll have no trouble fixing your thoughts on heaven.
 2. We have already examined numerous scriptures regarding heaven and have made these points:
 - a. Heaven is in the unseen realm. Not seen doesn't mean not real. It just means we can't see it with our physical eyes. We could say it this way: Heaven is in a different dimension.
 - b. Although heaven is currently invisible to us, heaven is a real place with real people who do real things -- many of the same things we do on earth. There are things on earth which are patterned after things in heaven, giving us a glimpse of what heaven is like. Man is made in the image of God and earth is made in the image of heaven.
 - c. There is continuity in heaven -- continuity of identity and memory. People look like themselves. People don't lose their memories of their life history and relationships. Death relocates people. It doesn't turn them into someone else.
 - d. Heaven is not other-worldly. The Bible refers to heaven as a garden, a city, and a country or a kingdom -- all terms that are familiar to us, terms that indicate heaven is a real place with qualities and attributes we would and will recognize.
 - e. We 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.
 3. As awesome as heaven sounds based on the things we've discussed so far, most of us would say that we're going to miss earth -- not the hardships and suffering of this life -- but the beauty and pleasures of this earth. But, the Bible gives us wonderful news. Heaven is coming to earth!
 - a. Heaven, where all who have died in the Lord now reside, is temporary. When Jesus returns to this earth, heaven will come to earth. In the future, heaven will be on earth.
 - b. Right now, heaven and earth are separated, but one day they will be joined together and we will live with the Lord on this earth -- earth as God created it to be, a perfect world. Scripture calls it the new heaven and the new earth. Rev 21:1; Isa 65:17; Isa 66:22; II Pet 3:13
 4. We still have more to say about what life is like in the present, temporary heaven. But, before we get to that, we need to introduce some concepts connected with the future heaven on earth.
- B. God's intention has always been to live with men, to live with His family, on earth. That's how the Bible begins and ends. Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3
1. Heaven is God's home. In the New Testament the word paradise is used to mean the place where those who have died in Christ dwell. II Cor 12:4; Luke 23:43; Rev 2:7
 - a. The word paradise is PARADEISOS meaning a walled park or enclosed garden. It is used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) for the Garden of Eden. Gen 2:8; Ezek 28:13
 - b. Before sin, God and man dwelled together in Eden. But, when man fell, the way to Eden, the way to heaven, God's home, was closed to man (Gen 3:23,24). At some point heaven or Eden became invisible or unperceivable to men.
 1. Jesus died to open the way to heaven, to open the way to Eden, once again to man. Through faith in Christ, men can now live in Eden, in the present invisible heaven.

2. However, when Jesus returns to earth, God will once again have His home on earth. Earth will be God's home. Earth will be heaven.
 2. At the Incarnation when God took on flesh, God came from heaven to earth to live in time and space.
 - a. When Jesus returned to the invisible heaven forty days after the resurrection, He kept His physical body. He is in heaven waiting to return to live on earth once again.
 - b. At the end of this age when Jesus comes again, God will make time and space His permanent home. As Jesus is God Incarnate, the new earth will be heaven incarnate.
 3. Old Testament saints understood their destiny better than most of us. They knew God would one day establish a physical, visible kingdom on earth and that they would live with Him on this earth forever.
 - a. Job 19:25-27--In Job, the oldest book of the Bible, Job expressed the fact that he will one day live again on this earth with the Lord.
 - b. Gen 5:18; Jude 14,15--Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied that the Lord would one day come to earth with all His saints and make things right on the earth. Jude 14,15
 - c. Gen 50:24-26--Before Joseph died in Egypt, he made his relatives swear to take his bones with them back to Canaan because he knew his body would be raised and that is where he wants to live.
 - d. Ps 37:11,29--The psalms of Israel say that the meek (humble, those who trust in the Lord) shall inherit the earth. The righteous shall inherit the earth forever.
 - e. Other than John the Apostle, the prophet Daniel was given more information about the end of this age and the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom on this earth than anyone else.
 1. Daniel was over ninety when he was given this final message. Dan 12:13-- But go on now to the end of your life and your rest; for you will rise again and have your full share of those last days. (Living Bible)
 2. Remember what rest means according to the Bible: Unbroken fellowship with God while enjoying the beauty, blessing, and benefit, and provision of God's creation. That is what heaven is. That is what heaven on earth will be. The Old Testament saints knew it.
 4. The Jews believed that the Messiah would bring heaven to earth. They believed God would restore Eden, and, by the time of Jesus' first coming, paradise had become the word used to mean the eternal state of the righteous.
 - a. When Jesus came to earth the first time, the Jews were looking for, waiting for the kingdom of God to come to earth. Luke 23:51; Matt 3:2; Matt 4:17; Luke 2:25; 38; etc.
 - b. After His resurrection Jesus spoke to His disciples about the kingdom of God which led them to ask: Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom, meaning establish your visible, everlasting kingdom on this earth? Acts 1:3,6; Amos 9:14,15; Dan 7:27; etc.
- C. Christians have trouble understanding our future because they do not understand resurrection of the dead. Resurrection of the dead is a foundational teaching of scripture. Heb 6:1,2
1. At physical death the inward man (spirit and soul) and the outward man (physical body) separate. The outward man goes into the ground and the inward man goes either to heaven or hell, depending on his response to Jesus in this life.
 - a. Although you are still you when you are separated from your body -- you still look like you, you retain your unique identity and your memories (Luke 16:19-31; Rev 6:9-11) -- you were not created to live without your physical body.
 - b. God made men to live in physical bodies. When we look at the creation of man we see that God formed the physical body first. Gen 2:7
 1. God gave men physical senses with which to enjoy the sensory pleasures of earth -- sights, smells, tastes, textures, tactile sensations.
 2. If that thought makes you cringe, you have been affected by Greek thought -- the idea that matter is evil. (Last week's lesson)
 2. God did not make men to be disembodied spirits. That is a temporary state and it will be rectified at

the resurrection of the dead.

- a. Resurrection of the dead is not science fiction or some scary “night of the living dead” type story.
 1. It is the reuniting of the inward man and the outward man which were separated at death -- the same person with the same body that died.
 2. At the resurrection of the dead every molecule of the original body will be recovered and made alive with eternal life, made incorruptible by the life of God and, we will be reunited with our original body. I Cor 15:48-57
 - b. Sometimes, in talking about resurrection of the dead, we say that we are going to get a new body. Unfortunately, people take that to mean we are going to get a different body.
 1. Your body will be made new in the same way your spirit was made new at the new birth. At the new birth you became a new creature (II Cor 5:17). You did not change into a different person. It’s still “you”, a “you” who has been transformed or made alive by the life of God.
 2. The word new (KAINOS) means new in quality and superior in character -- new in kind or order as distinguished from merely new in point of time.
 3. Job said: In MY flesh I’ll see God (v26). Paul said: THIS mortal puts on immortality. THIS corruption puts on incorruption (I Cor 15:53).
 3. Phil 3:20,21--Our resurrection bodies will be like Jesus’ resurrection body. His body is the prototype of ours. Our bodies will be beyond the touch of sin, corruption, and death, yet they will be perfectly suited for a physical life on a physical, material earth. Consider these points:
 - a. We see continuity. Jesus said His body would be raised (John 2:19-21). Just as He said, it was the same Jesus who died on Calvary whom His disciples saw on resurrection day (Luke 24:39).
 - b. His resurrection body could be seen and touched. He was not a ghost. (Luke 24:39,40). He could walk and talk (Luke 24:13-3). He stood. He could raise His voice (John 21:4-6). He cooked, ate, and drank (John 21:9-13; Luke 24:43; Acts 10:41).
 - c. His interaction with His disciples picked up right where they left off before His crucifixion. He talked with and taught His disciples just like He did before He died. Luke 24: 44-49; Acts 1:3-8; John 20:19-23; 24-29; John 21:15-22
 4. Resurrection from the dead means the restoration of the physical body to live a physical life in a physical world.
- D. Yes, but doesn’t the Bible say that earth is not our home -- we are pilgrims passing through. And doesn’t the Bible say that God is going to destroy the earth? Both of those ideas come from misinterpretation of the scriptures. Consider these points:
1. When Adam sinned in the garden, not only were men made subject to sin and death, but the entire creation itself was infused with death, with corruption.
 - a. Rom 8:20 says that the creation itself was made subject to vanity, decay (Conybeare), imperfection (20th Cent), not for some deliberate fault of its own (Knox) not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so (NEB).
 - b. Much of what we see in the earth today is not the earth as God created it, but the earth in bondage to sin and its consequences.
 1. The natural laws in effect in the world, the laws that govern the earth today, are largely the result of sin. They came into being with the fall of man and the curse that came upon the earth. Gen 3:17-19
 2. Rom 5:12--When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die. (Living Bible)
 - c. Just as, in consequence of Adam’s sin or because of Adam’s sin, the earth, the material creation was subjected to bondage, in consequence of or because of the salvation provided by Jesus, the earth, the material creation will one day be delivered from the bondage and corruption of the effects of sin. Rom 8:19-22

1. Earth will not be destroyed. It will be renovated. Earth has been corrupted by man's sin, but it will be reclaimed, redeemed, restored. (More details in upcoming lessons.)
 2. The new earth is the old earth reclaimed, redeemed, restored. And that is where we will live for eternity. That is heaven.
2. We said earlier that heaven on earth is referred to as the new heaven and the new earth in scripture.
- a. New is the same word used to describe a new creature in Christ -- the same person, but new in quality and superior in character. II Cor 5:17
 1. The earth will be the same earth just as a new creature is the same person -- only transformed.
 2. There will be a continuity between the present earth and the new earth just like there is continuity between a new creature and an old creature and there will be continuity between our mortal body and our resurrection body.
 - b. New means new in kind or order as distinguished from merely new in point of time.
 1. II Pet 3:10-13 tells us that the very elements of the material creation will be altered. Elements in the Greek (STOICHEIΟΥ) means the most basic elements of nature. Dissolved literally means loose as a bandage (John 11:44). Melt in v10 is the same word.
 2. The earth is under a curse as a result of Adam's sin. But, it will be purged by the fire of God's word (Jer 23:29). Just as God spoke His word in the beginning and created the original heavens and earth He will speak and atoms will literally be loosed and put back together in a new heaven and new earth -- the material universe released from the bondage of corruption.
3. Yes, but what about verses like, "Heaven and earth will pass away", and "We are only sojourners passing through. This earth is not our home."!?
- a. Heaven (meaning the material heavens above us) and earth AS IT IS will pass away -- not because it will be destroyed, but because it will be renovated, changed, and transformed.
 - b. When the Bible talks about us being sojourners who are only passing through it means earth AS IT IS. We are passing through not because we won't live forever on earth, but because we won't live forever on this earth AS IT IS. We are coming back to live on earth as it will be, heaven on earth.
- D. Conclusion: We still have much more to say about heaven on earth, but consider this point as we close.
1. The Holy Spirit used Peter to write the words about the earth being dissolved and the earth melting and it didn't scare him. In fact, it was a source of hope at a difficult time.
 2. Peter's second epistle was written shortly before he was martyred for his faith. He knew his death was imminent. II Pet 1:13,4
 - a. Peter, who was raised as an Old Covenant Jew and who spent many hours listening to Jesus discuss the coming kingdom recorded these words: II Pet 3:13--But we are looking forward to God's promise of new heavens and a new earth afterwards, where there will be only goodness. (Living Bible)
 - b. Knowledge of what lay ahead for him brought Peter strength and hope as he faced the hardships of life. Because Peter knew the truth about heaven, it was easy for him to keep his mind on heaven!