

## GOD GLORIFYING LIFE

- A. Introduction: At death, men, minus their physical bodies, pass into another dimension. Those who are in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ go to a place called heaven, God's home.
1. We are taking some time to examine what the Bible says about heaven. Many Christians have a lot of misconceptions about heaven which rob them of the excitement they can have about going to heaven.
    - a. Heaven is a real place. Much of what we see on earth is patterned after things in heaven. There is continuity of identity and memory in heaven. People do many of the same things we do on earth.
    - b. Paul, a man who visited heaven, said heaven is more, not less. He said heaven is gain, not loss. Paul said it was far better to leave this world and go to heaven. II Cor 12:1-4; Phil 1:21-23
  2. As wonderful as heaven now is, it is temporary. God did not make men to be disembodied spirits who live in an immaterial spirit world. God made men to live in physical bodies in a physical world.
    - a. God made men to be His sons and He made the earth as a home for His family and Himself (Isa 45:18). The Bible begins and ends with God on earth with His family (Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3).
      1. God's family and the home He made for His family has been damaged and corrupted by sin.
      2. The ultimate purpose of redemption is to restore God's entire creation (men and earth) to what they were originally meant to be. Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:19-23; Col 1:19, 20
    - b. In connection with the Second Coming of Jesus, this earth is going to be released from bondage to corruption and death. It is going to be cleansed and transformed.
      1. The earth will be made new and God and His redeemed family will come to a redeemed earth to live forever -- fulfilling God's original plan. Heaven will be on earth. Rev 21,22
      2. Life on the new earth will be new -- but familiar. The best of earth now gives us a glimpse of what is ahead. We want to talk more about what life will be like when heaven comes to earth.
- B. Life on the new earth will resemble life on this present earth. That makes sense when we consider heaven and heaven on earth in the context of the entire Bible, in the context of the "big picture".
1. Redemption is not about replacing God's original plan and creation with something else. It's about God reclaiming His creation from sin and corruption and restoring it to what He always intended.
    - a. Jesus came to earth the first time, not to destroy God's creation, but, through the Cross, to destroy the works of the devil which have corrupted God's creation. I John 3:8
      1. Jesus will come to earth again to complete the plan of God by removing every trace of sin, corruption, and death from His creation. Matt 13:37-43; II Pet 3:10,11
      2. We need to learn to think of heaven and what it will be like in terms of the "big picture". If we did that consistently, our misconceptions and concerns about heaven would vanish away.
    - b. One thing we see in both the present invisible heaven and the future heaven on earth is continuity.
      1. Why? Because God is not starting over with people who never existed before. Why? Because God is not starting over with an earth that never existed before.
      2. God is making all things new -- both the people (all those who choose to come to Him through faith in Christ) and the earth itself (God's original home for His family). Rev 21:5
  2. People in the present invisible heaven retain their identity, appearance, life history and memories. When heaven comes to earth there will be continuity of nations, cultures, and civilizations.
    1. Men and women will produce cultures and civilizations that glorify God. But, they won't start from scratch. Jesus is going to purify human civilizations and cultures so that they do what they were always meant to do -- glorify God. Rev 11:15; Dan 7:13,14,18,27
      - a. Cultural developments that were sinful will be eliminated. Those that were not sinful but used for sinful purposes or by people with sinful motives, will be purged, cleansed, to glorify God.
    - b. In Rev 21,22 John was given a vision of the new earth. John said that on the new earth men will serve God (Rev 22:3) and reign for ever and ever (Rev 22:5).
      1. On the new earth we will reign. That means we will fulfill the dominion mandate given to

men by God in the garden of Eden to subdue the earth -- to take its resources, enjoy them and use them to produce things that glorify God. Gen 1:26-28

2. On the new earth we will serve God. As we reign by subduing the earth, we will do work that is satisfying and meaningful, in the beauty of God's creation, in perfect fellowship with Him.
3. Every culture and civilization on earth has common elements. They build homes, plant crops, and make things (industry). They practice food storage and food preparation. They produce clothing and jewelry. They engage in storytelling and preserving of memories. They have art, music, celebration.
  - a. None of those things are evil in and of themselves. They are part of the image of God that men still bear even in their fallen condition -- the desire to create, build, explore, and discover (Gen 9:6; James 3:9; Rom 2:14,15). They are part of man's created purpose -- to reign over the earth and use its resources to produce cultures and civilizations that glorify God.
  - b. Yes, many of the cultural developments listed above have been used for evil in this fallen world. But, that will change when the earth is made new and cultures and civilizations are cleansed.
    1. Even under the curse of sin human creativity has produced some marvelous things -- from beautiful paintings to industrial and technological products, from books to spaceships.
    2. Can you imagine what mankind will produce when we have been perfected and glorified, when our motive in everything we do is to glorify God?
  - c. Culture is the product of man reigning on earth, exercising his dominion and subduing the earth. Culture is the "sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings" (Webster).
    1. That involves clothing, jewelry, art, music, crafts, literature, science, education, industry, food production and preparation, etc. All of those elements will be present on the new earth.
    2. In the previous two lessons we looked at work, commerce, industry, technology, food, and clothing on the new earth. For the rest of this lesson we want to deal with more aspects of culture and civilization on the new earth: music, books, art, learning, sports, drama, etc.
- C. To begin our discussion we must first deal with a common misconception about heaven -- the idea that we will instantly know everything when we reach heaven. People base that idea on I Cor 13:12
  1. We will not know everything in heaven. Only God knows everything. Omniscience (all-knowingness) is a characteristic of Deity, not of created beings. I Cor 13:12 does not say we will know everything.
    - a. The words know, know, and known are GINOSKO, EPIGINOSKO, EPIGINOSKO in the Greek.
      1. GINOSKO means to "know in the sense of understand or comprehend." EPI intensifies the word to "become fully acquainted with, really know, or know extensively".
      2. The word is never used in connection with men to mean "knowing everything or possessing absolute knowledge." If Paul wanted to say that he would have used different wording.
    - b. The idea here is that we will see things more clearly and, therefore, more accurately. Note the example Paul used to explain his meaning: Now, we see through a glass darkly. "We see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror." (New Living Bible)
      1. Mirrors then were very different from our mirrors. Corinth was known for its bronze mirrors, but the colors and shapes were distorted. You could not see your reflection as you truly are.
      2. Because of the effects of sin on humanity we do not see things clearly. We do not see reality as it truly is. In Greek thought seeing and knowing were synonymous. We see imperfectly.
      3. In heaven we will see God face to face. We will see Him clearly and our misconceptions and misperceptions will vanish. We'll know Him as He truly is. I John 3:2; Rev 22:4
    - c. We will always be finite beings. Finite means having definite or definable limits. Being finite is not a flaw. It is part of who we are as God's creations. It is part of being human.
  2. We will learn and continue to learn in heaven. God made us with intellect and curiosity.
    - a. GINOSKO and EPIGINOSKO are both also used to mean "to learn, to come to know". Acts 17:19; Phil 2:19; Matt 10:26; John 12:9; and Luke 7:37; 23:7; Acts 9:30; Acts 22:29
      1. Eph 2:7 says that in the ages to come, "all future ages" (Knox), God will show or reveal to us

- more about what His grace has provided. That is progression. That is on going revelation.
2. Matt 11:29--Jesus told His disciples "learn from me" (20<sup>th</sup> Cent). We will never exhaust or drain all there is to know from and about God who is infinite.
  - b. Part of subduing the earth is learning about its processes and resources. That won't stop on the new earth. We'll learn more and more about the wonders of God's creation.
  - c. We'll meet new people and learn from and about them -- people who lived on earth before us. We'll learn new things from and about people we knew on earth before its transformation.
  3. Some struggle with the idea of learning in heaven because it brings up issues such as: Will some of us know more or less than others? Will some of us be more skilled at certain things than others?
    - a. The Bible does not teach sameness in heaven, it teaches continuity. We will be the same people we were on earth with the same life history and the same gifts and talents. There is no reason to think that when we get to heaven we won't begin with the knowledge and skill we had on earth.
      1. I've never played tennis in this life. Maybe I'll learn to play on the new earth.
      2. But, I'll be a beginner compared to someone who has played for thirty years on the old earth.
    - b. Growing and learning are part of being human. Jesus, as a man, experienced both. Luke 2:40,52
  4. Based on the principle of continuity we know there will be books on the new earth. Every culture that has produced writing has also produced books. It's part of subduing the earth.
    - a. There are numerous books already in heaven, beginning with the sixty-six books that make up the Bible. John saw scrolls (books) in heaven (Rev 5:1,5; 10:2). God records things in books. He has a Book of Life, other books (Rev 3:5; etc.), books of remembrance (Ps 56:8; 139:16; Mal 3:16).
    - b. There will be books besides God's in heaven, books written on earth. Many great books have been written which were written to the glory of God.
      1. I Kings 4:29-32--The creatively, wisdom, and skill that produced books and poetry from Solomon came from God. Books will be redeemed. Nothing that glorifies God will be lost.
      2. New books will be written. It is ridiculous to think that the best books have already been written. Writing a book is an example of using God-given creativity to subdue the earth.
      3. People will have the passion, curiosity, and creativity when heaven comes to earth -- without the time constraints. There will be new information available to write about.
    - c. We know there will be books in heaven and we know there will be buildings in heaven. A building with books in it is a library. There will be libraries in heaven.
  5. We won't lose interest in the old earth -- in studying it and writing about it. Recording history is patterned after God. He keeps records and records history. His book shows His interest in history.
    - a. God repeatedly told His people to remember and set up reminders of what He had done for them (Ex 16:32; Ex 17:14; etc.). The new earth has memorials to the twelve tribes (Rev 21:12-14).
    - b. Every culture has a record of its past. In cultures without writing or literacy, men have oral traditions. But they still keep track of past events. It's part of the image of God in men.
    - c. Human history will not be erased. The history of the old earth is part of the history of the new earth. The new earth begins a new chapter in the history of earth.
      1. On the new earth we'll view history from the stand point of redemption -- how God worked in the affairs of men, causing everything to serve His purposes. There will be more to learn about all of it. John 21:25
      2. God is not limited by time. He may allow us to see events in the past as though we were there to help us understand how He worked in human history. Rom 8:28; Eph 1:9-11
  6. Every culture has art, music, dancing, drama, sports. None are inherently evil. All reflect the image of God in men. All are part of subduing the earth. All will be redeemed. All will be part of life on the new earth. Remember continuity!
    - a. Art: God is the master painter and decorator (look at His world), and we are made in His image. God gives men the wisdom and skill to produce works of art. Ex 31:1-11; 35:30-35; etc.
    - b. Music: The Bible is filled with people praising God with song and musical instruments. God

made men to sing. Ps 150; I Chron 15; Isa 38:9;20; Mark 14:26; Eph 5:19; James 5:13; etc.

1. There are trumpets and harps in the present heaven (Rev 8:7-13; 5:8). The children of Israel heard a ram's horn and trumpet blast come from heaven (Ex 19:13,16; 20:18)
  2. People sing in heaven. Rev 5:9; 14:2; 15:3 (songs of Moses suggest old songs, Ex 15; Deut 31). On the new earth there will be singing (Isa 51:3). God Himself will sing (Zeph 3:17).
  3. People in the Bible also dance to the glory of God. God made men to dance before Him. Eccl 3:4; Jer 31:4,5;12-14; Ex 15:20,21; II Sam 6:16; Ps 30:11; Luke 15:25; etc.
- c. Drama: Drama is story telling. Everyone loves a good story, whether it be a dramatic story of good triumphing over evil or a humorous story that makes us laugh or a mystery that keeps us guessing until the end. That is part of the image of God in men.
1. God is the Master author and director. Look at the story of redemption -- how God worked His plan and carried out His will in the midst of human choice. Jesus was a master storyteller.
  2. There are many references to people sitting around a table eating and fellowshiping in the kingdom of God. In that setting people laugh and tell stories (Luke 13:29;14:12-15; 6:21; etc.). God says to His people repeatedly: Tell the story of what I've done (Ex 12:25-28; etc.).
  3. Will we use the technology now available to tell stories -- television, movies, etc.? Based on the principle of continuity of civilizations and cultures, there is no reason to think we won't.
- d. Sports--The Christian life is compared to athletic competitions (I Cor 9:24-27; II Tim 2:5; Heb 12:1). God made us such that we enjoy exhilarating experiences. Our minds and bodies are suited for sports. We are made to run, to jump, to throw. Sports can glorify God (Kurt Warner).
1. Sports part of subduing the earth. When you ride a bike you use the earth's resources to make the bike and then you reign over gravity by learning to balance on two wheels. You use the resources of earth to make sports equipment and build stadiums. When you climb a cliff or ski down a snow covered slope or swim across a lake you are reigning over the earth.
  2. Glorified bodies doesn't mean equality and sameness in skill. Some of us will have more athletic ability and others less. Competition between people with various levels of skill is not sinful in and of itself. Losing isn't evil. Competition between sinful people produces sin.
    - a. There will be no more suffering or evil when heaven comes to earth, but that doesn't mean there won't be challenges. There is no reason to think we won't feel tired after expending energy to work hard or play hard. We will still be finite men.
    - b. There is no reason to think that Adam and Eve did not work hard and have to rest. Neither work nor rest is evil. After hard work or play we'll be able to experience the joy of rejuvenating rest in a world free from sin and death.

- D. Conclusion: We have not said all there is to say about heaven, but consider one point as we close. Heaven on earth will be life as it was always meant to be. We will glorify God in all that we do as we enjoy the wonders of His creation in perfect fellowship with Him.