

WHAT WILL WE BE LIKE IN HEAVEN?

- A. Introduction: As Christians we are instructed to keep our minds focused on heaven (Col 3:1,2). To set your mind on heaven you must be able to imagine heaven.
1. You can't image what you don't know. Additionally, much of the information we have about heaven is inaccurate, so when we imagine heaven, due to misinformation, what we imagine is not appealing.
 - a. We can't answer every question about our future in heaven, however, in this series, we are trying to get to the point where we have enough information about heaven to image what is ahead as gain, not loss. Phil 1:21-23
 - b. We have tried to establish a framework of information from the Bible about heaven which we can use to imagine what is ahead. We have made these points:
 1. The present heaven where all who have died in the Lord now live is a real place with real people who do real things -- many of the same things we do on earth. But, the present heaven is temporary because God did not make men to be disembodied spirits.
 2. In connection with the Second Coming of Jesus, heaven will come to earth. Heaven will be on earth. All people in the present heaven will be reunited with their original physical body (resurrection of the dead) to live a physical existence in a material world -- earth that has been loosed from bondage to corruption and death, earth that has been made new.
 3. God will make His home on earth with men, as He always intended. Rev 21:3--Now at last God has his dwelling among men (NEB) and He will make his living place with them (Basic).
 2. Some misconceptions about heaven come from misunderstanding what we will be like in heaven. People believe: We won't be ourselves. We won't know each other. We won't remember our past lives or relationships. We won't desire anything but God. In this lesson we want to begin to discuss these and related issues.
- B. Heaven is gain, in part, because it involves men (us) being restored to what we were always meant to be.
1. When we try to understand the things of God, we have a tendency to start in the middle of the story -- with us as sinners who were born into a fallen race. But, that is not where our history with God begins.
 - a. There has never been a time that God did not know you. Your history with God began in eternity past when He conceived a plan to create men and make them sons. Eph 1:4,5; II Tim 1:9,10; etc.
 1. God made man for a position of glory (Ps 8:5). He made men for sonship and relationship, with the capacity to become partakers of His life, capable of expressing His glory.
 2. God did not make men to sin or for sin. When Adam sinned, mankind fell from that position of glory (Rom 3:23). Salvation is about restoring men to his position of glory (Heb 2:10; etc.)
 - b. God took on flesh and came to seek and save His lost family (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to earth to redeem us through the Cross to bring us to God (I Thess 5:10; I Pet 3:18).
 1. God knows a perfect you -- the you He created in Adam (Gen 5:1,2). God's first assessment of you was: You're very good (Gen1:31).
 2. Redemption is about loosing you from bondage to sin, death, and corruption in every part of your being and resurrecting you or glorifying you -- making every part of your being alive with the life of God, eternal life.
 - c. Salvation is not about turning you into someone or something else. Salvation is about restoring you to the picture God has had in mind of you since eternity past.
 1. God will not "absorb you into Himself" and you lose your unique identity. That's Buddhism. You will not be turned into someone else. That is reincarnation.
 2. When you get to heaven you will still be you. If "you" are not "you" in heaven, then "you" didn't go to heaven. Someone else did.
 2. There is continuity of identity in heaven. The "you" who lived on earth is the "you" who goes to heaven. You will still have your personality, your memories, your life experience.

- a. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus gave an account of two men who died about the same time -- Lazarus the beggar and the rich men. Even though they were separated from their physical bodies they recognized each other. That means they were still themselves, still looked like themselves, and they still had memories of each other and their life on earth.
 - 1. The rich man remembered his father and brothers and was concerned about their spiritual condition. v27-31
 - 2. v25--The rich man in hell was unhappy about his situation. Abraham told him to remember that he is here because of things he did while he was on earth.
- b. Jesus was still a man, still recognizable, after His death and resurrection (Luke 24:39). When Jesus was raised from the dead He picked up right where He left off with memories and relationships. He went to see Peter (Luke 24:34; I Cor 15:5). Mary Magdalene recognized Him, and He remembered her and His disciples (John 20:15-18).
- c. Rev 6:9-11--John saw people in heaven who had been killed, martyred for their faith. The same people who were killed on earth were in heaven remembering their life and history. They were concerned about what is going on on earth, referring to some as their fellow servants and brethren.
- 3. The difference is that in heaven you will be fully perfected, fully restored. Heb 12:22,23 refers to the present heaven and refers to its inhabitants as, v23--...the righteous who have now reached perfection (Berkeley); ... the redeemed in heaven, already made perfect (Taylor).
 - a. While Jesus was on earth He showed us what sons of God look like. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Rom 8:29
 - b. To become like Jesus does not mean that you become Jesus or that you cease to be you. It means you become a perfect son, the son you were always meant to be.
 - 1. We become like Jesus in character. Character is moral excellence. But, we do not lose our personality. Personality is the totality of traits that make one person different from another.
 - 2. Uniqueness is the creation of God. Look at snowflakes, fingerprints, and the genetic code.
 - c. What makes you you is more than just your body. It is your personality, your life history, your interests and passions, your likes and dislikes; etc. Those will not be lost in heaven.
 - 1. Granted those things have been tainted by sin, but in heaven they will be cleansed, purified. You'll become the you you were meant to be, the you pronounced "very good" in Gen 1:31.
 - 2. This doesn't negate the fact that we can and are to grow in Christ-likeness in this life. But that is a process which will not be fully complete until heaven. (Another whole lesson!)
- C. Heaven seems like loss rather than gain because many Christians mistakenly think that they will not have emotions in heaven, they will have no desires, and they will want only God -- all non-biblical ideas.
 - 1. Many have the idea that in heaven we will desire only God because it is wrong to desire anything but God. We really can't imagine that and then we feel guilty.
 - a. That idea comes out of the influence of Greek thought -- like the desert monks who went out to live in caves as hermits. They were sincere but misguided.
 - b. God made us relational beings (next week's lesson). God made us to desire earthly things like food, water, rest, work, play, friendships, etc. God made us, not just to believe, but to feel.
 - 2. Emotions were created by God. They are part of human nature -- spirit, soul, and body. I Thess 5:23
 - a. Emotions are part of the image of God in men. The Bible says that God expresses emotions: He loves, He takes delight, He rejoices, He gets angry, etc.
 - b. When we talk about God's emotions we are talking about something beyond our comprehension.
 - 1. We are only familiar with human expressions of emotion which have been corrupted by the fall and often direct us to sin and ungodliness. Emotional issues and struggles are part of the curse, part of the effects of sin in the human race. Deut 28
 - 2. However, our emotions will ultimately be delivered from bondage to corruption and purified so they function as they were intended, in God-glorifying expressions. James 1:21; I Pet 1:22

- c. In heaven we will have emotions that are perfected -- all the flaws of sin, the results of sin, removed from our emotions. John saw people in the present heaven expressing emotions.
 - 1. He saw and heard martyrs passionately crying out for justice (Rev 6:10). He saw and heard multitudes loudly expressing praise to God (Rev 7:10). John even saw angels expressing emotions in heaven (Rev 7:11,12; 18:1-24).
 - 2. We know people will laugh in heaven (Luke 6:21). We know there will be feasting, singing, and rejoicing. All of those are connected with expressions of emotions.
 - 3. Everybody knows Rev 21:4--He'll wipe away all tears. But, notice, these are tears that come from pain, suffering, and loss. What about tears of joy? What will it be like when you see Jesus for the first time, or when you are reunited with a loved one you've not seen for years?
- 3. God made men with desires. A desire is a longing. To desire means to long for something. As with every other part of our being, our desires were corrupted by the fall.
 - a. Christianity is not the absence of longing or obliterating of longing, but rather the fulfilling of longing (Ps 16:11). Our desires will not be obliterated (that's Buddhism). Our desires will be purified, sanctified, redeemed, and fulfilled.
 - b. In heaven we will be finite beings. That means we will still have longings and desires that need to be fulfilled. When one meal is finished, we will look forward to the next. When one exhilarating experience is ended, we will look forward to the next. Part of joy is the anticipation of something.
 - c. We will have desires in heaven but they will not be ungodly desires. Our hearts and minds will long to please God.
 - 1. As a result of the new birth you already have godly desires in your spirit -- the "want to" to do what is right. When your soul is fully perfected (the law of God written on your mind, Heb 8:10) you will be fully able to express godly desires.
 - 2. In heaven there will be no conflict between what you should do and what you want to do. Duty and joy will be one and the same.
 - 3. We won't have to "put down" our desires. We will desire food without overeating. We will not have to resist lust or jealousy when others are recognized or doing well, etc.
- 4. This is hard for some of us to accept because we have been influenced by Greek thought (the idea that material things are unspiritual or even evil) and by religious ideas (the idea that we should want the Giver but not the gifts).
 - a. The primary and greatest joy of heaven will be seeing God face to face, knowing God is a way we do not now know Him -- seeing Him who created us for Himself, seeing Him who loved us and redeemed us, seeing Him who called us "so that you may share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". (II Thess 2:14--Goodspeed).
 - b. But the fact that God is the primary joy does not mean that there aren't lesser joys. And, in desiring them, we are desiring God because all good things ultimately come from Him.
 - 1. God is the source of all good things. James 1:17--All good giving and every perfect gift comes from above (NEB). Even now, on earth, we should enjoy God's gifts and be grateful for them.
 - 2. I Tim 6:17--Who provides us richly with all things for our enjoyment (Weymouth); who richly provides us with all the joys of life (Moffatt).
 - c. Where did the wood come from to make your house or the ore used in the metal in your car or the creativity that designed the engine? When you eat food you grew in your garden and cooked for yourself, who is the ultimate source of that food? God!! Acts 14:17
 - 1. Ps 36:6--You are concerned for men and animals alike (Taylor). In the context of God caring for men and animals v7,8 says: How precious is thy (RV) unfailing love (NEB) for this reason mankind desires to shelter within Your protecting power. They will be satisfied abundantly from Your vast reserves (Harrison) and from your delightful stream you give them to drink (NAB).

2. Ps 145:15,16--Patiently all creatures look to you to feed them throughout the year; quick to satisfy every need, you feed them all with a generous hand. (Jerusalem)
 5. All good things come from God and our enjoyment of them glorifies Him. In I Tim 4:1-5 Paul is talking about people who in the last days depart from the faith and abstain from “certain kinds of food” (20th Cent), but we get some details about God’s attitude toward the things He has made for us.
 - a. v3,4--God created food to be received from Him, “to be enjoyed with thanksgiving (NEB); to be gratefully shared in (NASB); to be enjoyed thankfully (20th Cent); for everything God has created is good (Weymouth).
 - b. When we enjoy the things He created it glorifies Him. What good earthly father gives his children gifts and then gets angry because they enjoy the gifts? No, the relationship is enhanced through the gift giving and receiving when it is given in love and received and enjoyed with gratefulness.
 - c. Yes, it is possible on this earth to put people and things above God because we have not yet been fully made free from the effects of sin in every part of our being, but that won’t be the case when we are fully perfected, in the present heaven and on the new earth.
 6. All of this may bring up the question: Will we be able to sin in heaven? The answer is no. We could do an entire lesson on this subject, but consider a few points as we close.
 - a. Rom 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. Rev 21:4 says that in heaven there is no more death. If there is no more death, that means there is no more sin.
 - b. Jesus came to earth to put away sin (Heb 9:26) and will never again need to die (Heb 10:10). Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus purchased our perfection forever (Heb 10:14).
 - c. Unlike Adam and Eve who were created innocent (without sin), we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ and are partakers of His holiness (II Cor 5:21; I Cor 1:30). In heaven, that righteous and holiness will flood and transform the parts of our being that were not changed by the new birth (I John 3:2).
 - d. The history of the old earth will be a monument for all time and eternity to what happens when men sin, when men choose independence from God. It produces misery, suffering, and death.
- D. Conclusion: We see heaven as loss, not gain, because we misunderstand some things about our makeup and our ultimate destiny.
1. Heaven is about continuity -- redeeming and resurrecting the men and women God made in Adam. Redeem means loosing from bondage. Resurrection means giving life to what is dead.
 2. God’s goal has never been to annihilate the sinner but rather to transform the sinner who comes to Him through faith in Christ. God’s goal is to carry out His original plan by undoing the damage caused by sin and make men sons like Jesus in character.
 3. In heaven you will be the “you” you were always meant to be. Heaven is gain, not loss. More next week!!