

INTERACTION IN HEAVEN

- A. Introduction: Revelation speaks of a final world ruler who will be empowered by the devil. Rev 13:4-6 says this man, inspired by the devil, will pour “out blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling place and those who live in Heaven”. (Phillips)
1. To blaspheme means to speak evil of and to slander. To slander means to make malicious, false statements. Since the beginning, Satan has used slander to entice men away from God. Gen 3:1-6
 - a. Thanks, in large part, to the lies of the devil, Christians have big misconceptions about heaven, God’s home, which rob them of the joy and hope that comes from knowing what is ahead for us.
 - b. We are working on replacing lies about heaven with the truth of God’s word so we can get to the point where we know for certain that what is ahead for us is gain, not loss. Phil 1:21-23
 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. But, it is temporary because God did not make men to be disembodied spirits. In connection with the return of Jesus, heaven will come to earth.
 2. All in the present heaven will be reunited with their original body to live forever on earth.
 2. We’re vulnerable to lies about heaven because we don’t understand heaven in terms of the big picture.
 - a. God made men for relationship, sonship (Eph 1:4,5). He made earth as a home for His family (Isa 45:18; Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3). God’s creation -- both mankind and the earth itself -- was damaged by sin at the fall of man. God’s creation is now in bondage to sin, corruption, and death.
 - b. Jesus came to loose God’s creation from bondage (redemption). He came to bring life to what is dead (resurrection) so that God’s original plan can be fulfilled. God’s plan is to redeem and resurrect His original creation -- release it from sin and death, transforming and restoring both men and earth to what God intended from the beginning (redemption, resurrection, continuity).
 3. For many people, this is their picture of heaven: We won’t know each other, we won’t have memories of life on earth. We’ll be one big communal group, all of us wearing white robes, standing around the throne of God in a perpetual worship service. All of that is contrary to information in the Bible.
 - a. It is clear from scripture that people in the present heaven recognize each other and remember their life and relationships on earth. Luke 16:19-31
 1. Rev 6:9-11--These people in heaven remember how they died. They remember that they have family and co-laborers still on earth, and they are concerned about them. They are actually interceding for people, praying for people, on earth, asking God for justice on earth.
 2. Jesus prays for His body on earth (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24). There is no reason to think that the family of God in heaven does not also pray for the family of God on earth.
 - b. At the resurrection of the dead we will get our original body back -- with the same DNA that links us to our blood family. However, in the present heaven and heaven on earth, a new element will be added. We will all be sons of God and we will all be one big happy family. Eph 3:15
 1. We’ll have family relationships with people who are our blood relatives on earth, but we’ll also have family relationship with friends, old and new.
 2. Because we will all be perfected, there will be harmony and fulfillment in relationships with family and friends that we can’t imagine right now.
 - c. The Bible says we will live forever on the earth we know (new, yet recognizable; cleansed, but familiar) as the people we have always been (now perfected) in societies that glorify God (Rev 21:24-26; Rev 22:2; Isa 65:17-25; Isa 60; etc.). We want to continue our discussion in this lesson.
- B. 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 experiences, your connection to and concern about your family. The difference is that in heaven you will be fully perfected. Heb 12:22,23
1. As part of the continuity, people in heaven are called by their same name. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob kept their names (Matt 8:11). So did Moses and Elijah (Matt 17:3). Lazarus kept his name (Luke 16:25).

The names of the twelve sons of Israel are written on the gates of New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12-14).

- a. Isa 66:22--For, as the new heavens and the new earth which I am making shall endure in my sight, says the Lord, so shall your race and your name endure. (NEB)
- b. Yes, but doesn't the Bible say we get a new name in heaven? (Rev 2:17). A new name doesn't invalidate the old one. Simon became Peter, Saul became Paul, and Jacob became Israel.
 1. Those name changes didn't mean they became different people. The new names indicated changes in their characters and in their roles of service to God.
 2. Isa 62:1-4 is a prophecy of Israel's future in the Messiah's kingdom. Note the new name for Israel: They will go from forsaken to Hephzibah (My delight is in her) and Beulah (married).
- c. Rev 2:17 says our new name will be private, known only to God and the one who receives the name, showing that God deals with and relates to us as individuals, not just as a communal group.
 1. We do not lose our individuality in heaven or become part of a communal group. Luke 15:7, 10 says heaven rejoices over each individual who turns to the Lord.
 2. What makes you you is more than just your body. It is your personality, your life history, your memories, your likes and dislikes, your interests, your passions, etc. God keeps the details of your individual life in a book. Ps 56:8; Ps 139:13-18 (Living Bible)
2. Not only does God treat us as individuals, we will have private property and possessions in heaven.
 - a. In Luke 16:1-14, in the presence of the Pharisees who were covetous and trusted in the power of their money and their charitable giving to get them into heaven (way more than we can talk about here), Jesus told a parable about an unjust steward. From it we get two details about heaven.
 1. The steward did what he did so that someone would take him into their home when he lost his job. In v16:9 Jesus says that unrighteous use of your money isn't going to get you into people's homes in heaven. Note, Jesus says that there are private homes in heaven.
 2. Jesus goes on to say in v12--If you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (NIV). Jesus is talking about private property and the context is clearly eternity, or heaven.
 - b. Isa 65:21 says men will build and live in homes on the new earth -- when heaven comes to earth.
 1. Micah 4:4--Everyone will live quietly in his own home in peace and prosperity. (Living Bible)
 2. Zech 3:10--The Lord of Hosts declares, you will all live in peace and prosperity and each of you will own a home of your own where you can invite your neighbors (Living Bible).
 - c. Matt 6:20 says store up your treasures in heaven -- your riches (Williams); your treasure (Phillips).
 - d. I Cor 3:14; II Cor 5:10; II Tim 4:8--We will each be given rewards of our own for our service.
 - e. We inherit (or come into possession of) things in heaven. Dan 12:13; Col 3:24; Rev 21:7; etc.
3. We will not be one big group that desires only God, perpetually worshipping Him around the throne.
 - a. God made us to desire, need, and enjoy relationship with Himself, above all. But He also made us to need and desire other people. He made us relational beings. Gen 2:18
 1. God is relational and we are made in the image of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have enjoyed fellowship, relationship, amongst themselves since forever.
 2. Think about it. Hopefully, we all have friends on this earth who make us better people. We see God in them and they help us show God more clearly in our lives.
 - b. There are times of corporate worship in the present heaven and there will be also on the new earth. But we have limited worship of God to "church services". In heaven we will live and work as men have always done (continuity) and all of it will glorify God and be expressions of worship to God.
 1. Col 3:22-24--To serve means to be a slave or to be devoted to and obey. You serve the Lord when your motive in all that you do is His glory and the good of others.
 2. Work predates sin (Gen 2:5,15). The word means to work, to serve. The word has the idea of

a joyful experience of liberation rather than toilsome labor. In heaven work will be redeemed.

- C. Many have the idea that in heaven we will all be exactly alike and everything will be exactly the same -- forever. And, if we are honest, that sounds really boring. Will heaven be boring? No!
1. We will not all be the same in heaven. We aren't all the same right now. There is no reason to think that will change in heaven. Remember continuity.
 - a. God made us unique. Adam and Eve were different before sin. He was bigger and stronger. She was beautiful. Acts 17:26 says that from one man God made many different people.
 - b. God made people with differing talents, abilities, giftings. I Cor 12:14-20; Rom 12:4-8; etc.
 1. We will all be equally valuable to God in heaven, but we will still be different from each other. "Sameness" is not equality.
 2. If you had no athletic ability on earth you won't suddenly be equal to Kurt Warner or Albert Puhols in athletic prowess. You won't suddenly be able to write a symphony if you have no such gifting on earth. Our skills and giftings will not be the same. They aren't now.
 - c. It's clear from scripture that we are going to receive different rewards in heaven based on our faithful service in this life. That will mean different positions and possession in heaven.
 - d. Yet, everyone will be fully happy. Everyone will be full of joy (Ps 16:11). "A pint jar and a quart jar can both be full, but the larger jar contains more."
 2. We will always be finite beings who are ever learning because we have an infinite God and an endless universe to explore. Part of being a finite being is being a learner.
 - a. We'll all be capable of developing greater skills just as we'll be able to grow in knowledge. Rev 6:10--These people in heaven ask questions of God, meaning: They communicate with God. They don't know everything. God answers their questions -- process occurs.
 - b. You may know things I do not yet know. You may see them from a perspective I do not yet have. That may lead to discussions and debates. Disagreement doesn't always come out of sin. They come out of varying levels of knowledge and differing perspectives.
 3. Friendships are based on similar likes and dislikes, similar interests, passions, similar personalities.
 - a. Since we will maintain our uniqueness, our personalities, and interests, preferences, likes and dislikes, it makes sense that in heaven we will be closer to some people than to others. Jesus had varying degrees of relationships while on earth.
 1. Relationships in heaven will come out of righteousness. We will be "right" in every part of our being (fully perfected) and we will treat each other "right"
 2. There won't be jealousy, pride, exclusiveness, insecurities, fear, the need to exalt self and put others down. There will be no hidden agendas, no betrayals, no pretenses, no sharp tongue, no outbursts of rage, no insincerity, no flattery. Imagine what relationships will be like!!
 - b. We'll have deeper relationships with those we already know. There are new relationships waiting to be established -- ancestors, people mentioned in the Bible, people from our favorite country!
 4. Heaven offers compensation. Jesus told His disciples that what they had lost for the sake of the gospel they would receive back (Matt 19:28,29). Jesus said that for those who mourn, heaven offers joy and laughter (Luke 6:21-23). Heaven will mean the reversal of life's injustices and tragedies (Matt 5:3-5).
 - a. In heaven God will redeem lost relationships. When we are fully perfected, the hurts we inflicted on each other will be a thing of the past, never to be repeated. Your loved one who inflicted pain on you will be perfected. All will be forgiven, forgotten.
 1. If you never have a nurturing family, a parent you could trust, those relational needs will be met in heaven through that person perfected or through other people.
 2. If you never have a child on earth you will have relationships which meet that need to guide, help, nurture, and invest in someone else.
 - b. What about babies and children who died? There is no one verse that says directly infants and children do or don't go to heaven (II Sam 12:23). But, we can deduce it by looking at the "big

picture”. This is a whole lesson for another day, but consider these points.

1. Babies and children are saved in the same way as anyone else -- through the finished work of Christ. The Cross provided much more than the sin of Adam took. Somehow, there is provision for those who did not live to be old enough to respond to the gospel (Rom 5).
2. Heaven is gain not loss. God redeems lost opportunities. Someone who lost the opportunity to raise a child due to the death of baby (through miscarriage, abortion, disease, accident, etc.) will have the opportunity to raise that child in heaven (the present heaven or the new earth).
3. How old will the babies be? Who cares for them until their parent gets there? We can't answer every question yet, but hopefully, you are beginning to deal with unanswered questions about heaven this way: Whatever the answer is, it is gain, not lost.
- c. We have the misperception that people who die young miss out. Such thinking comes from the lie that this life is the greater and best part of our existence. Loss now is temporary.
 1. We say: He never got to see his son married. How do you know that? We have a cloud of witnesses in heaven who are aware of what happens on earth (Heb 12:1; etc.). She died before she married. Yes, but in heaven she'll have a perfect wedding and marriage with Jesus.
 2. This life is not our only chance at life on earth. The best is yet to come. What we experiences in this life, the best life has to offer, is only a glimpse of what is ahead.
5. What if our loved one is in hell? How can we be happy in heaven? Some say we won't know they went to hell, their memory will be taken from us. Nowhere does the Bible say that. And, it would mean our joy was dependent on ignorance, what we don't know rather than what we do know.
 - a. Scripture is clear that when God finally administers justice to all who throughout history have rejected His offer of salvation, the rightness of what He is doing will clearly be seen.
 1. Justice for those who have rejected Him is eternal separation. All the angels, saints, and martyrs in heaven will praise God for His righteousness and justice. Rev 15:3; 16:7; 19:2; etc.
 2. The clear implication is that we, too, will participate in praising God for administering justice to those we have known and loved. Our perspective will change and we'll see things clearly.
 3. We'll see that every person who ever lived had enough light to respond in a saving way. We'll see that there will be no “good people” in hell. II Pet 3:9
 - b. Although this cannot be proven from scripture, some say that when people are ultimately separated from God in hell, they will no longer bear the image of God.
 1. Although they will still be the same people, they will be missing the qualities that caused us to love them. The beauty in anything is the beauty that comes from God.
 2. There will be a sense in which they are no longer the people we once loved. But, the relationship we lost will be restored through someone else.
 - c. No one in heaven will be crying over a lost loved one in hell. Heaven is gain, not loss -- no more sorrows, no more pain, no more tears of mourning. Rev 21:4
- D. Conclusion: Satan has lied about God's home It is not boring. It is not “freaky”. It's what life was meant to be. We still have more to say about heaven, but, can you see from the scripture and the principles of redemption, resurrection, and continuity that heaven is gain not loss? The best is yet to come.