

Foundations for Christian Maturity

The Reality of Heaven

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I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

A common question that has risen in mankind from generation to generation is, "***What happens to someone after death?***" Many people have had so called death experiences and have come back to life and told of their experiences. Philosophers and religious leaders have offered countless opinions on the subject as well. The ideas have ranged from reincarnation to simply ceasing to exist at all.

The Bible has a lot to say concerning life after death and what happens to the soul. Jesus spoke a great deal about this subject and declared that He Himself had come down from heaven and that after His death He would go there to prepare a place for those who would follow Him.

John 3:13 *"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

John 14:2 *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

Jesus also spoke a great deal about a second place that had been prepared for the Devil and his followers.

Matthew 25:41 *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, `Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

In this lesson and the next one I want to try and paint a picture for us on what the Bible has to say concerning the reality of both Heaven and Hell. God has provided clear answers regarding life after death. In this message we will be looking at the reality of Heaven and then next week we will look at the reality of Hell.

II. WHAT IS HEAVEN?

Heaven is a term in the Bible which describes three different spheres of existence. The word "heaven" sometimes refers to the atmosphere surrounding the earth. Other times it refers to outer space where the other planets are. Lastly, Heaven is the dwelling place of God and the elect angels. It is the everlasting home of the redeemed of all mankind. This is the Heaven we will be looking at in this message. It is the place where those who are not destined for Hell will live after death. In the New Testament it is clearly described as an actual place, and not a state of mind or being.

1. Terms Used To Describe Heaven.

John 14:2 *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would*

have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Hebrews 11:16 *But now they desire a better, that is, **a heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Revelation 14:13 *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest from their labors**, and their works follow them."*

2 Corinthians 12:4 *...how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

Luke 13:29 *"They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in **the kingdom of God**."*

The term "kingdom of God" represents the here and the now as well as the eternal domain. In fact most references concerning the kingdom of God refer to the here and the now. The truth is that we must enter into the kingdom of God now if we want to be a part of it in the eternal.

It is here in heaven that the believer is promised "the tree of life", not to be hurt of the second death, a stone with a new name in it, authority with Christ, a white garment and his name in the Book of Life; security in the City of God, and ruling and reigning in the Throne of God and the Lamb.

III. THE REALITY OF LIFE AFTER DEATH.

The Bible teaches that life continues after the physical death of the body. God created man with a natural, temporal body and an eternal soul. The soul of man consists of who we really are. It is the center of our mind, will and emotions. The Bible teaches that life is eternal.

1 John 2:25 *And this is the promise that He has promised us; **eternal life**.*

2 Corinthians 5:1 *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

When Jesus returns at His "Second Coming" all those who have died in Christ will be raised from the dead and then we who are alive will meet Him in the air. From that time on we spend 1000 years with Christ on the earth and then at the end of the 1000 years we rule and reign with Him throughout eternity. (See *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:20-25, 51-55 & Revelation 20:1-4, 21:1-4*).

IV. WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

The Bible refers to Heaven as being above the world, in that God looks down upon the earth

and that when Jesus left this earth he was received "up into Heaven".

Deuteronomy 26:15 *Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." '*

Mark 16:19 *So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*

Heaven will be a place of light, love, holiness, righteousness, worship, service, joy, peace and life eternally because Jesus the Redeemer will be there. The New Jerusalem will be the new capitol of the universe and the place where the redeemed gather for worship and service. There will be no darkness, hate, sin, unrighteousness, sorrow, discord or death there. Without these things, it will be heaven indeed. What a wonderful and worthy reward of the God who redeemed us!

1. It Is A Place of No More Thirst, Hunger, Sorrow, Pain Or Death.

Revelation 21:4 *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

Revelation 7:16-17 *"They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

2. Heaven Is A Place Where Nothing Can Be Corrupted.

Matthew 6:20 *"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

Revelation 21:27 *But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

3. Heaven Is A Place Of Pleasures Forevermore.

Psalms 16:11 *You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

1 Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

4. It Will Be A Place Of Worship.

Revelation 15:4 *Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested."*

5. Heaven Will Be A Place Of Constant Illumination.

Revelation 21:23 *And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light.*

Heaven is clearly described in the Bible as an actual place. It is not a feeling or a state of mind. When people refer to Heaven as being on earth they are partially correct in that we can experience a personal relationship with God while we are still alive. This is experiencing some of what is in store for those who will go to Heaven when they die.

V. WHAT IS NEEDED TO ENTER INTO THE GATES OF HEAVEN?

No one in Heaven will deserve to be there as result of any merit of his own. Because of this fact three will not be anyone boasting that he or she had earned the right to live in Heaven. The people who will live in Heaven will be full of gratitude to God for being allowed to live in His presence eternally. There is clearly only one way that is available to go to Heaven:

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Choosing Heaven means choosing to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Such a relationship brings a foretaste of Heaven in this life, and an eternity of happiness. You can make your decision today!