

Heaven – Part 3 – What Heaven Is Like

1. Review and Introduction

- a. Joke: The teacher asked her preschool class, “Now how many of you would like to go to heaven?” All of the kids but Tommy raised their hands. “Tommy,” asked the teacher, “Why don’t you want to go to heaven?” He answered, “I’m sorry, but I can’t. My mother told me to come right home after Sunday School.”
- b. Last 2 weeks we examined:
 - i. *Does Heaven Exist?*
 1. Heaven is like a kite that flies on such a long string that it is hidden from view. You can’t see it but you can feel its tug.
 2. The bible says that God has written eternity on the hearts of man. (Eccl. 3:11)
 3. We all long to know that there is more, that there is hope beyond the grave, that we are not just food for worms when we depart this earth.
 - ii. *A Glimpse of Heaven’s Gates*
 1. How a taste of heaven will change your life. (cf. Jacob’s encounter with God)
 2. You can experience heaven every time you worship, pray or minister.
 3. If you’ve not been tasting heaven, you may have your nose clogged up with the things of the world.

2. What is Heaven Like?

a. We will fully know God

- i. *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Cor 13:12)*
- ii. *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)*
- iii. Here on earth we don’t see God very clearly, but in heaven we will see Him face to face.
- iv. In heaven, we will see clearly and to see with far greater understanding than we ever imagined.
 1. You might recall when the Israelites entered the promised land, it was distributed to the 12 tribes, but one tribe did not get an inheritance.
 2. Dt. 10:9 *“That is why the Levites have no share or inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance,”*
 3. This is a glimpse of what heaven is like.
 4. We will see God in all of His glory and will want nothing else.
 5. This will be the ultimate and exceeding joy of heaven. To see and experience God without the barriers and difficulties we now have when we seek His face.

b. We will learn and grow

- i. In keeping with our finite natures, we will experience process in heaven. We will continually learn more of God "in the coming ages"
- ii. (Eph. 2:6-7). *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace”*
 1. Do you notice the phrase *“in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace.”*?
 2. The coming ages will be when we are in heaven – we will continue to learn and grow and experience new things. Growth will be eternal, (God is infinite) so our learning will be infinite and forever.
 3. Angels are finite and the bible says that they strive to grow in their understanding (1 Pet. 1:12 *“Even angels long to look into these things”*), and so shall we.

- c. **Time will not cease.**
 - i. I don't know if heaven operates outside the scope of earth's time sequence, but the inhabitants of heaven watch events happening in time (Rev. 2-3; Luke 9:23).
 - ii. It is a hymn, (not the Bible) which says "and time shall be no more."
 - 1. Revelation 8:1 speaks of "*silence in heaven for about half an hour.*"
 - 2. Even the presence of music in heaven implies some sort of time duration, since meter, tempo and rests, which are intrinsic to music, are all time related
 - iii. Time is simply a measurement, a mile marker or a reference point along the journey. Eternity flows but has its markers, its history.
- d. **We will know one another**
 - i. Dr. W. A. Criswell, the beloved pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, was once asked, "Will we know each other when we get to heaven?" His answer, "We won't really know each other UNTIL we get to heaven."
 - ii. Heaven is about relationships.
 - 1. What makes your house your home?
 - a. What makes it your home isn't the architecture, the mailing address or the garage.
 - b. It is the time you spend there, the investments you make to make it uniquely yours, the relationships that are nurtured there, and the memories that are made there.
 - 2. It is the same with heaven.
 - a. The investments you make there, the memories, the loved ones who precede you there, your Creator and Savior who has graven your name upon His hand awaits you. That is what makes heaven our home.
 - iii. We will know:
 - 1. The saints are said to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and to be "in Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22; Matthew 8:11); to "reign with Christ" (2 Timothy 2:12) We will know them!
 - iv. Our relationships will be different than on earth, we won't be married in heaven (because marriage was for the physical world, not the spiritual one).
 - v. After his resurrection, Jesus was not recognized at first on a few occasions (John 20:15; Luke 24:15-16), suggesting some change in appearance.
 - 1. After being with him a while, his disciples suddenly recognized him (John 20:16; Luke 24:31).
 - 2. This suggests that despite any outer appearance change, the inner identity of the person may shine through, especially to eyes enlightened by heaven.
 - vi. In Matt. 17:1-4, at the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were recognized by the disciples, even though they weren't told who they were, and they couldn't have previously known what they looked like.
 - 1. This suggests we will recognize instantly people we know of but have not previously met.
 - 2. You will know them in your "knower"
 - 3. So you can take confidence that you will know people in heaven!
- e. **In heaven, we will remember our lives on earth**
 - i. Memory is a basic element of personality.
 - 1. There will be some continuity of memory from earth to heaven.
 - 2. We are not different people, but the same people, simply relocated and transformed.
 - 3. Heaven cleanses our slate of sin and error, but does not erase it.
 - 4. The lessons we learned here about God's love and grace and justice surely are not lost, but carry over to heaven.

5. They are built upon and greatly expanded, but not eliminated.
6. To eliminate them would be to erase the record of joy and thankfulness that brought us into a relationship with Christ in the first place.
- ii. The martyrs in heaven remember at least some of what happened on earth, including that they underwent great suffering.
 1. In Rev. 6:9-11 they anticipate and look forward with strong emotion to God's coming judgment.
- iii. I think that we will even remember negative things, but the change in our perspective will get rid of any need we might have for a loss of memory
- iv. In heaven, those who endured bad things on earth are comforted for them (Luke 16:25).
 1. The concept of comfort implies a memory of what happened.
 2. If there was no memory of the bad things, what would be the need for comfort concerning them?
- v. The bible also tells us that we will give an account of our lives on earth, down to specific actions and words (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36).
 1. Given our improved minds and clear thinking, our memories should be more, not less acute as to our past lives on earth.
 2. Certainly, we must remember the things we will give an account of.

f. In Heaven we will be aware of what is happening on earth.

- i. In heaven, we will be aware of at least some of what is happening on earth.
- ii. The Bible confirms it:
 1. The martyrs in heaven appear to know what is still happening on earth (Rev. 6:9-11).
 2. When Babylon is brought down, an angel points to events happening on earth and says "*Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you*" (Rev. 18:20).
 - a. Since he specifically addresses them, the clear implication is that the saints in heaven are watching and listening to what is happening on earth.
 3. There is "the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting Hallelujah" and praising God for specific events of judgment that have just taken place (Rev. 19:1-5).
 - a. Again, the saints in heaven are clearly observing what is happening on earth.
 4. When brought back to earth from heaven, Samuel was aware of what Saul had been doing and what he'd failed to do on earth (1 Sam. 28:18).
 - a. Unless he was specially "briefed" on this, it follows he must have been already aware of it.
- iii. Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "*run the race marked out for us,*" creating the mental picture of the Greek competitions which were watched intently by throngs of engrossed fans, sitting high up in the ancient stadiums. It tells us of a "great cloud of witnesses" who are the saints who've gone before us, whose accomplishments on the playing field are now past.
 1. The imagery seems to suggest those saints, the spiritual "athletes" of old, are now watching us and cheering us on from the stands of heaven.
 2. Does that seem eerie? Knowing your friends and loved ones can see you as you plod through life...cheering your victories and maybe gasping at your defeats?

g. Heaven is absolutely indescribable.

- i. The Apostle John in Revelation 4 & 5 and 21 & 22 makes incredible descriptions of heaven. They are too lengthy to read here today, so I urge you to read them when you have a quiet moment this week.
- ii. Rev. 21 –22:
 1. Walls of Heaven – each made of precious gems and minerals.
 2. Gates of Heaven – each a single pearl.

3. Streets of Heaven – made of pure gold like transparent glass. (ever see gold look transparent?)
 4. Light of Heaven – is God and Jesus is its lamp.
 5. River of Water of Life – flowing from the throne of God.
 6. Tree of Life on BOTH SIDES of the river of life.
- iii. In Rev. 4 we see a description of God
1. V2-3: *At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.*
- iv. In Rev. 5 we see a panorama of heaven with countless angels, 10000 x 10000 encircling the throne of God. They were all worshipping.
- v. *As Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveler of the 13th century, lay dying, he was urged by his detractors to recant—to withdraw the stories he had told about China and the lands of the Far East. But he refused, saying, “I have not told half of what I saw.”*
- vi. Heaven is a spiritual world, and from the perspective of the flesh, it is so incredible that we cannot describe it or take it in.
1. How many here have been to the Grand Canyon?
 - a. I have been told that no photograph does it justice. It is beyond words, and that only by experiencing it can you understand its majestic splendor.
 - b. Heaven is like that.
 - c. *A little girl was in awe of a butterfly she was watching, and she said to her dad, “If the wrong side of heaven is this beautiful, I can’t wait to see the right side of heaven.”*
- vii. Paul warns us that *“no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”* (1 Cor. 2:9)
- viii. And while I have said I will tell you what heaven will be like – I have to admit, mere words cannot describe the wonder it contains.
- h. There will be no more pain in heaven.**
- i. Scripture assures us that for those in heaven God in the end *“will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away”* (Rev. 21:4).
 - ii. Does this mean there will be no memories of loved ones lost to hell? (wouldn’t that cause us pain?)
 1. It is a mystery, but we can only conclude that the glorified human mind will be configured in such a way that it is able—without pain—to recognize both God’s justice and the free choices of men that led to damnation. God’s own happiness is not damaged by the existence of hell, and he will not allow our ultimate beatitude to be damaged, either.
- iii. No More Tears**
1. How many tears fall from the face of a fallen world? Where do those tears fall?
 - a. Does an experience of crying ever go unnoticed by the Father?
 - b. The child crying because of the death of parent or puppy, the women weeping because of a failed marriage - multiply these by billions and you will realize that we live in a fallen and crying world.
 - c. In Heaven, we will live with Jesus Christ who wiped away our sins on the cross and now wipes away our tears in Heaven.
 2. What will dry our tears in Heaven? No handkerchief will do.
 - a. Heaven will offer the ultimate explanation for each tearful experience in this life so that we will never cry again.
 - b. You will view your sorrowful experiences on earth from the perspective of Heaven.

- c. This will dry your tears forever. God will wipe away all tears by explaining his ultimate purposes.
 - d. All who live in Heaven will live with the final acceptance that God's justice was fully served according to an eternal plan.
 - e. One day God will walk with you into the sunset of His marvelous love and just his presence will solve all the dilemmas. O
 - f. One day God will take your face and cradle it in his love and you will be free forever.
- iv. No more pain, waiting in doctor's offices, or pulling over for ambulances.
- 1. No late night calls to the pastor or middle-of-the night trips to the emergency room.
 - a. Parkinson's Disease will not silence loved ones,
 - b. Cataracts will no longer steal your vision,
 - c. Chemotherapy will no longer steal your hair.
 - d. Suicide bombers will not steal children.
 - e. No more walks for cancer, CF, or AIDS. No need for insurance; no Aflac or State Farm, even if you are in "good hands."
 - f. One day the nail-scarred hands of Jesus will hold you.
 - g. It's the Fathers House. He's preparing it for you, and it will be the home of your dreams.
- v. The first thing to be banished from Heaven is sin.
- 1. With sin's departure go all the effects of pain.
 - 2. As Paul says, "death is swallowed up in victory."
 - 3. The king of all fears is barred from Heaven's doors.
 - 4. Heaven is a place where mankind is no longer propped up by painkillers.
- vi. **If one of these apply to you...let me hear you say amen.** I mean shout it out!
- a. Leave your Advil, your Excedrin, your Tylenol behind when you go to heaven
 - i. You won't need your blood pressure medicine there.
 - ii. You won't need your arthritis medicine there.
 - iii. You won't need your cholesterol medicine there.
 - iv. You won't need your diabetic needs or insulin there.
 - b. There will be...
 - i. No more migraines.
 - ii. No more back pain.
 - iii. No more antibiotics.
 - iv. No more sinus infections.
 - v. You won't need that old wheelchair or that cane any longer!
 - c. The new body that God is fashioning for us will be free from pain.
 - d. Hallelujah!
2. **Is it any wonder Jesus healed people? He was giving them a taste of heaven!**
3. *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* John 14:3
- i.
3. Will you be there?

4. The Master's There - In one of his books, A. M. Hunter, the New Testament scholar, (Source unknown) relates the story of a dying man who asked his Christian doctor to tell him something about the place to which he was going. As the doctor fumbled for a reply, he heard a scratching at the door, and he had his answer. "Do you hear that?" he asked his patient. "It's my dog. I left him downstairs, but he has grown impatient, and has come up and hears my voice. He has no notion what is inside this door, but he knows

that I am here. Isn't it the same with you? You don't know what lies beyond the Door, but you know that your Master is there."

5. Do you hear your Master's voice beyond the door? Moving day is coming! Are your bags packed? Ann's are!
 - a. The day that we die will not simply be the day that we pass away but rather it will be the day that we move into our new home. We will go to a great and wonderful home where there is no sorrow, there is no more pain, there is no suffering but rather it is a place of happiness and grace.
 - b. *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* John 11:25-26