

Heaven

Last week our dear friend, Denise Mendonca, went to be with the Lord. Her husband of 39 years, Tom, who lost his sister only a few weeks before, enjoyed his birthday, their anniversary and this next week will celebrate Thanksgiving with his son and daughter and seven grandchildren. I have been processing Denise's home-going over this last week.

I have concluded that the greatest reason for our thanksgiving ... is Heaven.

When I went to Bible college the president stated that believers were
'...so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good.'

My reaction which I still believe is that most believers are so earthly minded that they have become no heavenly good. Tragedies remind us that there is more to life than the present; that apart from being heavenly minded – thinking beyond this life – we cannot process the things of this life.

Jesus spoke of heaven and how we respond to it:

"... rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." (Luke 10:20)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matt. 5:3)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matt. 6:19-21)

Three Responses to the Word of God:

Hear

Hope

Heed

We **hear** the Word of God and learn well what it says.

We **hope** in the truths we learn from the Word of God. We place our faith in God's goodness and sovereignty, and believe that He will keep all His promises.

We **heed** God's Word by building our lives upon the principles of Scripture by obedience and daily dedication to every command, teaching and example.

I. Of Heaven We Hear.

One seminary-trained pastor said,

“Whenever I think about Heaven, it makes me depressed. I’d rather just cease to exist when I die... I can’t stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp ... it’s all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn’t sound much better than Hell. I’d rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that.”

Paul wrote to his beloved Philippian church.

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain ... But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better, et to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.” (Phil. 1:21-24).

J. C. Ryle, a nineteenth-century British Theologian, said,

“I pity the man who never thinks about heaven.”

We could also say, “I pity the man who never thinks accurately about Heaven.”

The problem today is inaccurate, unbiblical assumptions instead of what the Bible clearly teaches.

Randy Alcorn writes,

“...the Bible portrays (heaven) as a New Earth with a great capital city made with precious stones; a New Earth that contains trees and rivers, and where resurrected people come in and out of the gates, engaged in meaningful relationships and productive activity.”¹

Think of –

Stepping on shore, and finding it Heaven!

Of taking hold of a hand, and finding it God’s hand.

Of breathing a new air, and finding it celestial air.

Of feeling invigorated, and finding it immortality.

Of passing from storm to tempest to an unknown calm.

Of waking up, and finding it Home.

Hazel Felleman, *Poems That Live Forever*

¹ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004), pp. 6-7.

We are to live here with Heaven in our hearts and our hearts in Heaven.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them." (Rev. 21:1-3).

Heaven Described:

1. New Heaven and Earth

Heaven is brand new – renewed – washed and cleansed from all remnants of sin and corruption.

2. New Jerusalem – a place of beauty and relationships with God and man

Greatness and intimacy – open doors

3. God is with men – God dwells with men.

When we think of going to heaven it is men with God.

The actual heaven is going to be God with men.

When Jesus came He was Immanuel – "God with us"

The incarnation was God becoming man, as John wrote,

"And the Word (who was and was with God and was God) became flesh, and dwelt among us (tabernacled), and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

(John 1:14).

When people die they go to be with the Lord. Their spirit and soul separate from their body. Their bodies return to the dust of the earth while their spirit and soul are in the presence of the Lord. At the resurrection they are rejoined with their bodies and are changed into a glorified state like the body that Jesus had after His resurrection.

Paul wrote,

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep; that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave He stated,

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).

Paul spoke of the resurrected state of believers,

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” (Phil. 2:20-21).

When Jesus returns he will return with all His saints and establish His millennial kingdom on the earth. After a thousand years of peace and perfect rule, Satan will be released for a short time to stir up trouble with unbelieving hearts. This is followed by the Great White Throne Judgment. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14-15).

The lake of fire is the final eradication of sin in the universe. God’s kingdom enters the world.

What we miss by knowing Christ is hell and what we gain is heaven.

II. In Heaven We Hope.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of the Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
(1 Peter 1:3-5).

How can we have hope?

Because God has promised Heaven to us.

To Daniel the angel said,

“The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever – yes, for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18)

Peter wrote,

“But according to His promise we are looking for a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:13).

What will it be like in Heaven?

From Revelation 21 and 22 we observe that as heavenly citizens we will eat, drink, work, worship, learn, travel, and experience much of what we do now.

The Prophet Isaiah gives a detailed description,

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new hearth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness...” (Isaiah 65:17-18)

He speaks further of security, happiness, peace, longevity, and satisfaction.

III. Hoping for Heaven We Heed.

“For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for **the blessed hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...”
(Titus 2:11-13).

Heaven is coming but we are not there yet.

Until then we live with hope in anticipation of Christ’s glorious appearing.

A pastor was preaching on heaven and asked, “How many of you would like to go to heaven tonight?” And everybody but one little fellow in the balcony raised their hand. He tried again but got the same results. So he said to him, “Son, don’t you want to go to heaven?” The little boy said, “Yeah, someday, but I thought you were getting’ up a load right now.”

Jesus described heaven as a “renewal of all things” (Matt. 19:28)

Peter preached,

“[Christ] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through His holy prophets.” (Acts 3:21).

What makes heaven so attractive isn’t just what is going to be there, the Lord, the glory, and beloved saints...

But what isn’t going to be there is also just as attractive.

What things will change in Heaven? (H. Lockyer: *All the Doctrines of the Bible*)

- No sickness, nor pain – Rev. 22:2
- No hunger, nor thirst – Rev. 7:16, 17
- No sea – emblem of unrest and dissatisfaction.
- No death – Rev. 20:14
- No night –
- So sin – Rev. 7:16

They will be replaced with...

- Fullness of joy – pleasures forevermore – Matt. 25:21, 23
- Rest from weary labor – Rev. 14:13
- Unceasing service – Rev. 7:15; 22:3
- Perfect knowledge – 1 Cor. 13:9-12
- Perfect beauty and safety – Rev. 21:19-21
- Happy reunion with loved ones – 1 Thess. 4:13-18
- The bliss of being with and being like Jesus – 1 Jn. 3:2, Rev. 22:4²

Randy Alcorn writes about “What won’t be in heaven?”

² Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), Pp. 285-290.

“No death, no suffering. No funeral homes, abortions clinics, or psychiatric wards. Not rape, missing children, or drug rehabilitation centers. No bigotry, no muggings or killings. No worry or depression or economic downturns. No wars, no unemployment. No anguish over failure or miscommunication. No con men. No locks. No death. No mourning. No pain. No boredom.

No arthritis, no handicaps, no cancer, not taxes, no bills, no computer crashes, no weeds, no bombs, no drunkenness, no traffic jams and accidents, no septic-tank backups. No mental illness. No unwanted e-mails.

Close friendships but no cliques, laughter but no put-downs. Intimacy, but no temptation to immorality. No hidden agendas, no backroom deals, no betrayals.

Imagine mealtimes full of stories, laughter, and joy, without fear of insensitivity, inappropriate behavior, anger, gossip, lust, jealousy, hurt feelings, or anything that eclipses joy. That will be heaven.

There won't be churches or temples in the new universe, not because they're bad, but because they won't be necessary. We won't need to be drawn into god's presence. We'll live there, constantly and consciously. We'll thank God profoundly, and worship and praise him together, whether we're working in a garden, singing, riding bikes, or drinking coffee (no reason to think there won't be coffee trees on the New Earth).

Jesus said, “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you.... Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven” (Luke 6:21-23).

No one will go hungry, and all will be satisfied. No one will weep, everyone will laugh. That is the promise of Jesus. Count on it.”³

We hear, we hope, we heed –

We face each difficulty here, by looking through the lens of heaven.

C. S. Lewis wrote,

“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”

³ Alcorn, pp. 35-36.