

RETHINKING ETERNITY, WEEK TWO

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE? / A GLIMPSE OF GLORY

Review... We learned last week that when we die, we will be in an intermediate state called Hades, where the saved wait in Paradise and the unsaved in Tartarus. And so the 'schedule' of redemption looks something like this....

When the Bible talks about heaven, it refers to the perfected state of the created universe and the final dwelling place of the righteous. When Christ returns, this present evil age will give way to the age to come. The universe will be purified and cleansed by the power of God. We ourselves will be changed – our bodies will be resurrected and renewed and made perfect. I hope you've got your Bible and device oiled up, because we're digging in today!

Why is this important to us? It is a stimulus to our faith...**Hebrews 11**

- **V10 – Abraham** - By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- **V24 – faith Moses**, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. **25** He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **26** He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

For these and multitudes of others, this is not mythology; it is our future reality...

2 Pet 3:10-13 - the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives **12** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. **13** But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

- The Day of the Lord – the heavens will be destroyed by fire,
- The earth and everything in it will be laid bare
- We look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness

So, what is heaven going to be like? First, we need to acknowledge that whatever pictures we may paint, the reality is going to be far greater. (STEAK-smell, look, texture, flavor)... Today, we're going to talk about the who, what, and where of heaven. We'll touch on what we'll be like, what we'll be doing, and what won't be there. We'll

look at a couple of video clips... and we will have only gotten a glimpse of the reality that awaits...

Who: Hebrews 12:22-24 - But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. So, who can we expect to meet?

The Spirits of Righteous Men made perfect – all of God’s OT Saints – sit and talk with Moses, with David, with Joshua, the Church – all of God’s new covenant people throughout time – we’ll be able to get to know people like Peter, Apollos, Timothy, Titus, Abraham, Isaiah, and ten thousand others.

Angels – not fat, naked babies with wings – but powerful, mighty beings.

The Holy Spirit – our comfort, helper, and illuminator

Jesus – Revelation 1:12-15 - John saw this Vision: **10** On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, **11** which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. **14** The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. **15** His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. **16** In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. **18** I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

God the Father – there he sits, on an iridescent throne, in unapproachable light, in all of his Sovereign Majesty – larger than large, holier than holy, possessed of more power and perfection than any human mind can comprehend! And what this God - this immutable, astonishing, gracious, infallible, overwhelming, omnipotent, unequalled King of the Heavens - what He wants to do most of all is to sit down with each one of us and enjoy eons of fellowship.

What? What is the nature of Heaven? - Consider the most beautiful place imaginable. Tahiti / Mountain Sunrise / Greek Island. Take those images and multiply by a gazillion! Heaven is unimaginably great! It is so great that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has laid up in store for us! Paul was given a vision of paradise, but apparently there were no words in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic to describe what he saw & heard! He needed new words! Here are some things God has said to help us imagine...

The Colors of Heaven - Rev 21:19-21 - The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. 19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.[f] 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

- Jasper – a kind of quartz / Sapphire / Chalcedony / Emerald
- Sardonyx / Carnelian / Chrysolite / Beryl / Topaz /
- Chrysoprase / Jacinth / Amethyst / Pearly Gates / Gates of Pearl / Streets of gold

The Feel of Heaven

- Home– though the gates and into the city
- New, but familiar; Not transitory, but defined & real. We will be settled, permanent, walled, established by title, signed, sealed, recorded.
- In John 14, Jesus tells us that he's gone to prepare a place for us - a mansion, a house, built by God – enduring & incorruptible, fitted for every use, worthy of God: it's a home conceived, engineered and designed by the master Architect, overseen up by the master contractor, built by the master artisan. And that home is in a city teeming with life – never feels the chill or touch of death. No conditions, no time, no graves. **(Film Clip from “What Dreams May Come”)**
- It's a place of happiness; in fact, there's a river flowing through it. Psalm 46 tells us this: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. This is the river of happiness... Feelin' a little down (you won't be in heaven)? But if you were, walk on down and drink from the river!

What will we do there?

It will be a life that refreshes, blesses, satisfies the soul. We'll enjoy the pursuit of life, the employment, enjoyment, and increase. The whole mind, soul, spirit, heart, and imperishable body will be widened, elevated, deepened, refined and beautified.

Sometimes we get this picture of hanging around on clouds, strumming harps and enjoying unending leisure. But really that sounds a little boring. What will we do?

- We will receive rewards – the crown of righteousness, the crown of life (Jas 1:12), the crown of rejoicing (1Th2:19), the incorruptible crown of 1 Cor 9:25, and the crown of glory (1 Ptr 5:2-4)

- **We will worship. Rev 5:11-14** - Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. **12** In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped. Worship in heaven will be immensely moving, stimulating, invigorating, and satisfying,

- **We will fellowship** – w/ all the great disciples of eternity
- **We will learn** – since a vast ocean of ultimate knowledge will be opened up to us, and because our minds will be supernaturally renewed, we will be in a state of ever increasing knowledge, having the secrets of the new universe opened up and revealed to us.
- Matthew 25 tells us that we’ll inherit a Kingdom, which means that we’ll be royalty... and all of the ways that we serve and give will bring us great joy!
- We’ll travel... because since we have jobs, we’ve got to get places...

What will we be like in heaven? 1 Cor 15:35-58 - But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” **36** How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. **37** When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. **38** But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. **39** Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. **40** There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. **41** The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; **43** it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **44** it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. **49** And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we [g] bear the image of the heavenly man.

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. **We will be immortalized!**

Acorn/ Oak Tree

- The first analogy he gives us here is that of planting & sowing. This is an acorn; this contains seeds... this is the mighty oak that results! The body that you live in when you pass away is just a seed... your future reality—your resurrected self—is far greater!
- **Phil 3:21 – But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**
- You might be built like a Greek god or goddess in this life; it doesn't compare to what you will be... Consider the raised body of Jesus (intermediate) - He could transport himself from one locale to another, walk through closed doors. If we're going to have authority & work, then we're going to have to get where we're going... Whatever it's like, when we experience it, it will be new and miraculous – no pain, no limitations, no aging, no wrinkles, no fatigue
- I keep waiting for Hollywood to get pictures of all of this... one of the highest earning movies of all time is James Cameron's Avatar... he painted pictures of a place called Pandora (not a planet, but the moon of a gas giant planet called Polyphemus in the Alpha Centauri A star system - none of which you needed to know). Let's take a short look...
- **FILM CLIP**
- Cameron's vision was so vivid that people leaving the movie were depressed to re-enter their reality.

As we wind down, let's talk for a minute about what will not be there...

- No more handkerchiefs, because God will wipe away every tear.
- No more funeral parlors, caskets, crying or mourning or dying - because there will be no death there
- No more drug stores, hospitals, no doctors or nurses
- No evil - no murderers, no human traffickers, no pedophiles, no abusers...
- No moving vans - if Jesus is building your spot, I doubt you're going to want to move
- No bills... no depression... no bad days... no fear... no insecurity...

As we turn to Revelation 21, I'd like the worship team to come back up...

We read in **Revelation 21**, “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Encourage one another with these words...

Next week, we’re continuing in the deep end, as we explore the topic, “Will the Lost Suffer Endlessly?”