

# The Nature of Heaven

Lesson One: Paul R. Blake

## Introduction:

- A. We frequently mention heaven in our conversations and classes, sermons and songs, poetry, prayer, and praise.
  - 1. We dream about it, hope for it, long for it, and live for it.
  - 2. We get momentary glimpses in the face of someone newly baptized, in the happiness of newlyweds, in the gaze of a mother at a newborn child
  - 3. We get the fleeting feeling of being there when we experience peace and fellowship as we worship in harmony with precious fellow saints
  - 4. But like catching a glimpse of something out of the corners of our eyes, it is quickly gone, and the harder we look for it, the more certain we feel that it wasn't really there in the first place.
  - 5. But it enough to keep us looking, longing, and living.
- B. Why are we here? To get ready for there
  - 1. We are on a journey, a quest, if you will - Heb. 11:13-16
  - 2. So, what are we looking for?
- C. Questions:
  - 1. Is heaven real?
  - 2. What will heaven be?
  - 3. Who will be in heaven?
  - 4. What will we be in heaven?
  - 5. What will we do in heaven?
  - 6. Will we know one another in heaven?

## I. IS HEAVEN REAL?

- A. More real than this world
  - 1. No one outside of Christ knows this better than quantum physicists
  - 2. Our apprehension of matter and energy is based on our perceptions, not necessarily reality
  - 3. Which is more real: something that decays and is easily destroyed, or something that cannot be changed and lasts forever?
- B. It is not a fairy tale made up to manipulate the gullible
  - 1. Your senses are not designed to apprehend the spiritual realm
    - a. Mr. A. Square of Flatland
    - b. The Bible is the point of impact where the spiritual world intersects with the material world
  - 2. John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21 - The kingdom of Heaven exists in us by faith in this world, the only means by which it impacts the physical world
  - 3. It cannot be seen with a telescope or approached by the space shuttle, but it is still real.
- C. Ever think of the consequences of denying the existence of heaven?
  - 1. A denial of the existence of heaven is an indictment of Jesus
    - a. Matt. 6:19-21; John 14:1-2
    - b. What kind of benevolent leader lies to his followers?

2. A denial of heaven makes the apostles into superstitious fools
    - a. Col. 1:5; 1Peter 1:3-4
  3. A denial of heaven makes the Old Testament heroes of faith into bearded old men running around the wilderness in their bathrobes
    - a. Heb. 11:10, 15-16
  4. A denial of heaven makes your Christian friends into pathetic losers
    - a. 1Cor. 15:13-19
  5. A denial of heaven makes one a materialist with self-inflicted blindness
    - a. Even astro-physicists are objective enough to live by the motto: "If it can exist in theory, it must exist somewhere in the universe."
- D. The word of God treats heaven as a real place
1. Paradise - 2Cor. 12:2-4; Luke 23:43; Rev. 2:7
  2. The prepared place - 1Cor. 2:9
  3. The New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven - Rev. 21:1-2
  4. New heaven and new earth - 2Peter 3:13
  5. The Bible is touted as a book of wisdom that has served as a guide for millions of people throughout history, it has been influential in the development of western civilization, and it is the basis of our understanding of civil rights.
  6. It also speaks of heaven frequently. If there is no heaven, it is suspect in its entirety. Accept it or reject it entirely.
  7. If one is not going to be spiritually honest with himself, at least do not be intellectually dishonest.
  6. Proving that there is no heaven is as futile an exercise as trying to prove there is no God

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### Lesson Two

#### **II. WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE?**

- A. Perhaps the greatest appeal of heaven is in what will NOT be there.
  1. Rev. 21:3-4, 27
  2. There will be no sin or temptation - Rev. 20:10
  3. The ungodly and unkind will not be there - Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5
  4. No night there - Rev. 22:5
  5. No work and weariness - Heb. 4:9
  6. No end to the peace and happiness
    - a. Matt. 25:46; Rev. 22:5; 1Thes. 4:17; 2Cor. 4:16 - 5:1
- B. What will it be like? Impossible to describe with any accuracy
  1. A place where true treasure is kept secure
    - a. Matt. 6:19-21, 5:12; Col. 3:23-24
    - b. If you imagine heavenly treasure as material wealth, you do not understand heaven or what is truly to be valued
    - c. Heavenly treasure does not appeal to the desires of the flesh, eyes, or pride

- d. Heavenly treasures have nothing to do with property, buildings, gold, jewelry, or boxes of cash
- e. Eternally in love, always at peace, forever happy, unending relationships with God and all of His children, infinitely beauty
- f. If you want to go to heaven simply because of the mansion, gold streets and jeweled gates, you're not going to get there
- 8. A place where we will meet the heroes of faith and all of the good people from all time - Rev. 21:9-26
- 9. A place of beauty that cannot be imagined or described adequately in this world - Rev. 22:1-17
- B. Sadly not all will enter heaven
  - 1. Matt. 7:13-14 - Addressed to the people of God under Law of Moses
  - 2. Heb. 3:12-19 - In case there is any doubt.
  - 3. The local church directory is not the book of life
  - 4. We will discuss who will be in heaven in lesson

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### Lesson Three

#### **III. WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN?**

- A. It is the home of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit
  - 1. Psalm 103:19; Ezek. 48:31-35; Rev. 21:1-3, 22, 22:1-3
  - 2. Before the Judgment Day, God's throne is in heaven; after that it will be in the New Jerusalem with His children
  - 3. Jesus - John 14:1-3; Heb. 9:24
  - 4. Holy Spirit - John 1:32; 15:26
  - 5. When we get to heaven we will spend eternity with God - 1Thes. 4:17
- B. Angels will be there - Rev. 5:11
- C. Bible heroes of faith - Heb. 11:32-35
  - 1. Abraham - Luke 16:22-23; Heb. 11:10, 16
  - 2. Apostle Paul - 2Tim. 4:7-8.
  - 3. There are godly men and women whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life and in the pages of the Bible: Mary, the mother of Jesus, Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe Epaphroditus, Stephen, Aquila, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Andrew, etc.
- D. Who else?
  - 1. Not addressing the destiny of those who are unable to discern right and wrong (babies, small children, those with mental disorders rendering them incapable of comprehending the truth)
  - 2. We must understand that for all others only those who obey the gospel will be saved.
    - a. Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16, 2:38; 1Peter 3:21; John 3:3-5
    - b. Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 21:27, 20:11-12
  - 3. Only the saved who persevere until the end will be saved
    - a. Rom. 2:7 - In this verse we find three things:

- 1) Perseverance - Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Gal 6:9; Heb. 10:35-36
  - 2) They do good - Matt. 25:31-40
  - 3) They seek for glory - they do not want to miss heaven, and they look diligently to make sure they find it.
    - a) 2Tim. 2:15; Matt. 13:45-46
    - b. Those who keep the “Christian virtues” - 2Peter 1:10-11
    - c. Psalm 15:1-5 - who may dwell with God
    - d. Matt. 5:3 - the poor in Spirit
    - e. Matt. 5:8 - the pure in heart
    - f. Rev. 2:7 - Those who overcome
    - g. Rev. 14:13 - the dead who die in the Lord
    - h. Rev. 22:14; Matt. 7:21 - the obedient
    - i. Eph. 5:23-27 - the church will be there
    - j. These are the “worthy” - Rev. 3:4; 2Thes. 1:5
- E. Most of us know godly men and women whom we look forward to seeing one day. Parents, grandparents, a child who passed from this life, dedicated elders, faithful Gospel preachers who helped to build your faith, brothers and sisters in Christ whose kindness and godly example moved you

#### **IV. WILL BABIES BE THERE?**

- A. Simply stated, Yes.
  1. Those who are in a saved condition and those who are in a “safe” condition
  2. That term is not used specifically in scripture, but it describes our understanding concerning those who never obeyed the gospel because they were incapable of the faith and obedience necessary to submit to God’s will. This applies to infants, small children, and those whose mental capacity prohibits them from adequately understanding.
  3. Matt. 19:14, 18:3; 2Sam. 12:23
- B. Will God, who is the righteous, loving, merciful, and infinitely wise Judge, deliver the right ruling in this matter?
  1. Gen. 18:25 - “Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

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### Lesson Four

#### **V. WHAT WILL WE BE IN HEAVEN?**

- A. We will be like Him - 1John 3:2
  1. We don’t know what we will be like; it has not yet been revealed
  2. We do know this; we shall see Jesus as He is and be like Him
  3. 1Cor. 15:50-51 - we shall be changed. We have to change, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.
  4. Phil. 3:20-21 - our bodies will be transformed to conform to His body
  5. Rev. 1:12-17 describes the vision of Jesus that John saw on Patmos

6. Matt. 17:2-3 records the transfiguration of Jesus when Moses and Elijah appeared to Him.
  7. Ex. 34:29-30; Dan. 12:1-3
- B. We will be perfect.
1. Heb. 12:23; Matt. 5:48; Rev. 7:16-17
  2. All the imperfections we struggle with in life -- temptations, failure, sin, disappointments, worries, stress, and mistakes in judgment -- will not be there. We will be as God intended for us to be from the beginning.
- C. We will be eternal.
1. 1Cor. 15:52-53; 1John 2:25; Rev. 21:4
- D. We will not be governed by earthly relationships
1. They were only given to facilitate human interaction in this world; they will not be needed nor will be relevant in the world to come
  2. 1Peter 3:1-2, 7 - On this earth, we have roles and duties within our relationships to help each other prepare for heaven
  3. Luke 20:35-36 - We know that the purpose of marriage and the male/female subjection on this earth is to create and raise a family, which will not be relevant in heaven
  4. Gal. 3:26-29 - In scripture there is nothing to indicate subjection to one another will continue in heaven as it is here on earth

## **VI. WHAT WILL WE DO IN HEAVEN?**

- A. We will worship God for all of eternity
1. Rev. 4:10-11, 7:9-12, 15:2-4, 21:22
- B. "Won't that be boring?"
1. We do not know exactly how we will worship Him, but we can be certain it will not be boring. It will be eternal bliss and joy.
  2. A more appropriate consideration might be what makes worship boring here in this world?
  3. More often than not it has to do with our attitudes -- improper attitudes.
  4. In heaven there will be no improper attitudes. That is a part of perfection
- C. Rev. 7:15, 22:3 - we will continue to serve God.

## **VII. WILL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER IN HEAVEN?**

- A. There are two schools of thought on this.
1. Those who believe we will not recognize each other say this because of the memories of and relationships with loved ones while on earth.
    - a. They reason that if we recognize one another and remember our relationship on earth, we will also remember those who are not there, and it will be sad to know who is not there
    - b. Also considered is Matt. 22:30, which speaks to the fact that in heaven there will be no marriage and we will simply be "like angels of God in heaven."
    - c. If we know each other in heaven, we will know our mates and want to maintain the earthly relationship

2. We will know and recognize each other there. At least we will in time get to know each other individually.
  - a. 1John 3:2 - we will see Jesus and recognize Him as He is.
  - b. 1Thes. 4:13-17 - speaks of us being caught up together with Him. It also mentions those who have fallen asleep (the text indicates that some to whom Paul was writing knew them and longed to see them again.)
  - c. Luke 16:23 - Rich man in torment knew Abraham & Lazarus
  - d. Matt. 8:11 - speaks of being there with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob
  - e. 2Sam. 12:23 - David looked forward to going to his son after he died (indicating a belief that he was still alive and that he would recognize him)
  - f. Matt. 17:3 - the transfiguration; in some way the apostles were able to recognize Elijah and Moses.
  - g. Angels in heaven are distinct in person and different in role.
- B. One might ask: "How can I be happy in heaven knowing that my beloved ones are lost for all of eternity?"
  1. How much we will remember of the lost is not specifically addressed in the scriptures, but we know this -- there will be no sadness or tears; God will wipe away all tears - Rev. 21:4
    - a. "God will wipe away all tears" - He will comfort and remove every cause for sorrow. How He will do it is not revealed
    - b. When we get to heaven we will know that those who belong there are there, and we will better understand and accept it
  2. We don't need to have all of the explanations in this world. Not sure we can understand a Divine realm based only on earthly experiences. Just trust that we will understand better when we get there.
    - a. Will not knowing change your mind about going there?
- C. Keep reading and dreaming of being at home in heaven. It will keep you focused and give purpose and hope while we live here in this world.
  1. 2Cor. 5:8-9; Phil. 1:21-24