

HEAVEN: WHAT IS IT LIKE?

Selected Scriptures

Introduction:

In Hebrews chapter 11 – the great heroes of faith. First part of the chapter – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham... read vv. 9-10 – looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God. Then the writer speaks of Sarah and the miraculous birth of Isaac.

Then he says... *read vv. 13-16.* "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." Isn't that what we all want? There is something in the human heart that desires something better than what we have now. And I am not talking about a bigger house or a fancier car, although many people get focused on that sort of things too.

But the reality is that we often look around us at the world we live in and we can't help but think that there must be something better. There is the desire for a better home.

Last week, we began this brief series of messages about heaven. In the context of speaking to his disciples about heaven, Jesus told them, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life..." (John 14:6) Last week we look briefly at the Truth about heaven – the reality of heaven. Yes, heaven is real...it is a real place that Jesus is preparing for us to go and live there...to dwell there with him.

There are those who deny the reality of heaven. They would argue there is nothing more than the natural life we live here on earth. Man is strictly a natural being—there is no God, no spirit world, no life but the natural life we know in the here and now. But that denies the reality that we are also spiritual beings. We not only have a body, but we also have a soul and spirit.

The problem we run into these days is that there are also those who would spiritualize the reality of heaven. Yes, they say, we are spiritual beings. But heaven is just the mystical kind of life that we will enjoy when this life is over. Yet the Bible speaks of heaven as a real place, where we will live for all eternity.

So what is heaven like? That is the question we want to try to answer very briefly this morning. Earlier in our service we read some verses from Revelation 21, which described some aspects of heaven and the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. In some of the verses we didn't read, John goes on to describe the city itself—the physical characteristics of the New Jerusalem. There are the gates of pearl, the jasper walls, the streets of gold, clear as crystal. It would be easy and fun to talk about all those things.

But that is not really what is on my mind this morning. When I ask the question, what is heaven like? I am not thinking about what it looks like. I want to just spend a few minutes thinking about life in heaven. What is it going to be like to be in heaven? How will it be different than the life we know now here on earth?

A pastor in Santa Barbara, California, by the name of Dan Schaeffer, has written a magnificent book entitled, "A Better Country." The subtitle is, "Preparing for Heaven." In that book he has a section entitled, "Heavenly Life: The life we were always meant to live." That is what I want to speak about for the next few minutes. What will life be like in heaven? There are two areas that we will look at.

I Shall See Him, Face to Face

Dan Schaeffer, in his book, writes, "*One day my God will look me in the eyes, and I will look Him in the eyes. Even as I write these words, that thought takes my breath away. It sounds almost sacrilegious or heretical to say that—especially since the Bible makes it clear that 'God is Spirit.' Yet that same eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who is spirit became Immanuel, God with us.*"

It is impossible to see God today. The Scriptures tell us that He is invisible. Paul, in his letter to Timothy said, "...*God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.*" (1 Tim. 6:15-16 NIV). When Moses asked God to reveal himself to him, God said, "...*you cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live.*" (Exo. 33:20)

Yet God has promised that in heaven we will finally see Him. We will really see him. Schaeffer says, *“One day we will be in the physical, intimate presence of our Creator, our Lord, and our Savior. His relationship with us will be more personal and intimate than any human relationship we have ever experienced on earth.”*

I don't fully understand the thought that Jesus is both divine and human. I have trouble getting my head around the truth that God is a Spirit existing as the eternal Father, yet at the same time God exists as the Son in a glorified body. But, I do know that the Bible says that one day I will see him. 1 John 3:2 tells us that, *“...what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”*

Several thousand years ago, as Job endured incredible trials, he turned his eyes heavenward and expressed the assurance that, *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God...”*

It is this assurance that has been the theme of many songwriters over the years. One of the greatest of these was Fanny Crosby, who lost her eyesight at 6 weeks of age. She wrote hundreds of hymns over her lifetime, many of them focused on heaven. One of the things that she often expressed was the joy that the first thing she would ever see was the face of her Savior. And that hope was expressed in the hymn, *“Saved by Grace.”*

*Someday the silver cord will break, And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake Within the palace of the King!*

*And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story—Saved by grace.*

In Revelation 21 we read these words – *read Rev. 21:3-4*. To be in the very presence of Jesus Christ, to dwell with God and have him dwell with us will be something very special. All of the pain and sorrow, the mourning and crying will be wiped away with one glimpse of his face. *Refer to the chorus: “It Will Be Worth It All.”*

There is another aspect to the glory of heaven I want to consider...

The New Me: A Total Transformation

1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12; 2 Cor. 3:18

The Bible tells us that the goal of the believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ. *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”* (Romans 8:29 ESV)

One of the things that becomes painfully obvious, the longer I live, is how far short I come in this area. Positionally, the Bible tells us that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms and we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Yet from a practical standpoint, I fall so far short of what I should be as a man, a father, a husband and a pastor.

I sometimes wonder, what would it be like to be everything that God intended me to be? What would it be like to have a perfect mind, to always have the right attitudes and emotions, to have the perfect outlook on life? And on top of all that, what would it be like to no longer be susceptible to all of the aches and pains, the illnesses and diseases that we cope with in this fallen world.

Well, one day I am going to find out. There are so many glorious things about heaven: We will be in a wonderful and perfect place; We will be face to face with our precious Savior.

But on top of all that, we will be changed. That will be the most glorious make-over we can imagine. What will the new me be like. The Bible indicates that it will be a total transformation.

A Transformed Mind – no longer will I struggle to think of the right words to say what I want. No longer will I have trouble remembering people's names. I will have perfect and complete knowledge. And most of all, I won't have to deal with the impure and poisoned thoughts and attitudes that influence my thinking now.

A Body made for Eternity – In heaven our new and glorified bodies will no longer be affected by disease. We will not have to face pain and discomfort. Our bodies will never grow old. Nothing will be able to weaken it or wear it down.

A New Heart – Our emotions and attitudes will no longer be influenced by the negative circumstances and situations of the world around us.

Our heart, which is so easily drawn away to the pleasures of the world and the attraction of riches and possessions will be focused only on God and the worship of God.

I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to the new me. Everything will be changed. I will no longer be subject to the struggles of this sin-sick world. Paul said in 2 Cor. 3:18 that little by little we are being transformed into the image of our Savior. One day, when we get to heaven that transformation will be complete, and we will be like Him.

Conclusion

What will heaven be like? It will certainly be a beautiful place. But the most wonderful things about heaven will be:

1. The Presence of God – we will see him. We will bask in the light of his glory.
2. We will be transformed – we will finally be all that God intended us to be, body, soul and spirit will be perfect, unmarred by the sin and sickness of this world.

Close with invitation ...