

HEAVEN: HOW TO GET THERE

Selected Scripture

Introduction:

Several weeks ago, before leaving for some vacation, I did a couple of messages regarding heaven. However, I didn't quite finish the series, so we are going to do that this morning. But we need to review a bit to get backup to speed with what we saw previously before we move on.

The first week we looked at the question, Is it Real? Is heaven really a place we can look forward to or is it just an imaginary place designed to bring comfort to grieving people? What is the **truth** about heaven?

As we considered that question, we looked at the question of the resurrection. After all that is really the starting point. If there is no resurrection, nothing beyond this life and the grave, then obviously there is no heaven or future life in heaven. We looked at the question brought by the Sadducees and the trap they tried to set for Jesus in Mark 12. But Jesus made it very clear that they were mistaken in their belief that there was no resurrection. They were wrong because they did not understand the Scriptures or the power of God.

Yes, we concluded, there is a resurrection. And yes, heaven is for real. It is a place where Jesus is preparing an eternal dwelling place for us. And one day we will be raised up again, and we will be changed, and we will dwell with Him for all eternity.

The second week, we looked at the question, What's it Like? What will life be like in heaven? How will it be different than life here on earth? It is easy to focus on the wonder and beauty of heaven – the golden streets, the jasper walls and the gates of pearl. But that doesn't answer the question of what life will be like there.

As we considered that question I focussed on two areas. The first was the wonderful truth that we will be in the presence of the Saviour. We will see him. We will look God in the face and glory in his presence. The One who said in the Scriptures, "No one can see my face and live," will be viewed in all of his glory.

As believers, we can say with Job, *"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 shall see God..."* (Job 19:25-26)

The Apostle John assures us in 1 John 3:2 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."*

The other aspect of life in heaven that we looked at is the wonderful assurance that we will be completely and utterly transformed from the sinful human being we are here on earth. There will be a totally new "Me." I will have a transformed mind, no longer poisoned by earthly attitudes and thoughts. I will have a body that is made for eternity, no longer susceptible to illness and disease, or death. I will have a new heart, no longer influenced by the world or the pleasures of sin, but focused only on God and the worship of God.

Yes, heaven will be a glorious place, where nothing harmful or discouraging can ever affect us. Rev. 21:4 tells us that *"[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

So, heaven is real. Jesus is preparing a place for us. It is a wonderful place where we will be forever with our Saviour, and we will be completely transformed into all that God intended for us to be. But the next question is vitally important. How do we get there? How can we be sure that when this life is over and we enter eternity, we will be there in heaven? I want to address that question briefly this morning.

The Question

A question I sometimes ask people: "If you were to die tonight and stand before God, and he were to ask you, 'Why should I allow you into heaven,' what would you say?"

Many do not have the right answer to that question. They are counting on their good life, doing their best, their baptism or church attendance. But none of those things will get you into heaven. They are all good things but are not the means to salvation.

So what is? In John 3 we have the account of a religious leader by the name of Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus to question him about his words and works. Jesus speaks very plainly about his need and it is obvious that his words apply not only to Nicodemus but to all of us. He said,

“Unless one is born again (or born from above) he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”

So, how is one born again? We will delve into that in a moment, but before we do, I want to say a bit about some of the “Christian” terminology we sometimes use in talking about being saved.

- “Ask Jesus into your heart.”
- “Invite Jesus into your life.”
- “Give your heart (life) to Jesus.”

Let me say right away that these ideas are not necessarily wrong, but they often give the wrong impression. God does not want your heart. He wants to give you a new heart, a cleansed heart.

Let’s consider briefly at the idea of asking Jesus into your heart or life – not biblical. No where are we instructed to ask Jesus into our heart. *Refer to Rev. 3:20* – it is a good picture, but the context has nothing to do with salvation. It is about fellowship – *expand*.

Now, having clarified that, let me say something else. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ and are saved, God does enter our life. He does come in by His Spirit and dwell within us. But that is not how we are saved.

We are not saved by asking Jesus into our heart or life. He comes in and dwells in us because we are saved. In other words, ***Jesus entering our heart or life is the result of salvation, not the means of salvation.***

Okay, let’s move back to the question of how one is born again.

The Answer

My questions about being born again – I didn’t question it. I knew what it meant. The Bible is clear that salvation is by faith. I think you all know that. There are many Scripture verses and passages that speak to this:

- “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31)
- “Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith ... not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)

We are all familiar with these verses. But I wondered why the Bible wasn’t clear about the connection between being saved through faith and the new birth. Then, only a few weeks ago, as I was thinking on this, I realized that it is clear. The Apostle John makes it clear. Let me see if I can present this so it makes sense.

- John 3:3 – You must be born again (born from above).
- What happens when you are born the first time?
 - You enter this world with life – a living, breathing being, physically alive.
 - You become a part of a family – your earthly family
- So what would you expect to happen when you are born again, from above, born of the Spirit?
 - You would receive spiritual life.
 - You would become part of a family, God’s family

That is exactly what John tells us will take place. Turn back to John chapter 1. *Read vv. 1-4* – In Him was life – there is where the life comes from. Now down to vv. 11-13 – *read them*.

When you believe in His name, you are born again, born into his family. You become his child.

Now let’s jump back to John chapter 20. *Read vv. 30-31*. When you believe in his name you receive life, spiritual life. That is what it is to be born again. When you were born the first time, you received physical life, earthly life and you became part of a family. When you are born again by believing in Jesus name, you receive spiritual life, eternal life, and you become part of God’s family.

Conclusion

So, then there is one remaining question: What does it mean to believe in his name?

His name represents all that he is and who he is and all he has done. Do you know what the name of Jesus means? The name "Jesus" is the anglicized version of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which means "Savior."

To believe in his name is simply to believe that he is the Savior, that he is the one who can make you fit for heaven.

Close with a gospel presentation using the ABC's:

A – Admit or Acknowledge that I am a sinner

B – Believe that Jesus is Savior, that he took the punishment for my sin

C – Call on Him, Cast myself on His mercy.

So there it is. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

So, if you were to stand before God and he asked you why you should be allowed into heaven, what would you say? I know what my answer would be.

"I don't deserve to be allowed into heaven, but I have been born again, by believing in the name of Jesus. He has paid for my sin, forgiven my sin, and given me new life. His mercy and forgiveness is my only claim to a place in heaven."

Prayer

Communion