

Heaven God's Home

Text: various

Intro: There are a lot of opinions about heaven. Probably one of the more famous in Australia was Kerry Packers interview in which he said that it did not exist. "I have good news and bad news", he said. "The good news is that there is no devil, and the bad news is there is no heaven either."

The problem with that is it is his opinion. Yes, he based it on being dead for 6 minutes, but who is to say that God has to reveal Himself to the unsaved that will be living again soon?

There are actually an overwhelming number of stories from people who died and were brought back to life. Almost all say there is a heaven or hell. My own grandfather was one such person. He was dead for 15 minutes at one point, and he had something to say on the subject as well.

This morning we do not want to base our time together on hear-say. We know the Bible is true - it has never been wrong. So let's see what the Bible says about heaven.

Theme: The Bible teaches us that heaven is. . .

1. Defined: According to the Jewish notion there were three heavens,

1. The atmosphere, as "birds of the heavens"(Gen. 2.19; 7.3, 23; Ps. 8.8, Lam. 4.19 etc.)
2. The starry heavens or outer space (Deut. 17.3; Jer. 8.2; Matt. 24.29).
3. "The heaven of heavens," or "The third heaven"(Deut. 10.14; 1 Kings 8.27; Ps. 115.16; 148.4; 2 Cor. 12.2).

For the sake of time this morning we are going to concentrate only on the last one of these three.

Popular culture tends to make a caricature out of heaven as a place where people sprout wings and become angels, wear halos, strum harps, walk on clouds and often rest comfortably on a big fluffy cloud. St. Peter supposedly sits at heaven's gate, deciding who may enter. Heavenly choirs sing incessantly. And the only thing to do is worship all the time. Even the Telegraph promotes these stereotypes.

Fortunately this is all wrong! Men never become angels, and walking on clouds is never mentioned in scripture.

An intensive study of the Bible would lead us to define heaven as:

"The place above that was created by God to be a supernatural dwelling place of God; other heavenly beings and His redeemed."

2. Lets look at the inhabitants of heaven.

1. God dwells there. 1 Kings 8.30 "*. . . in heaven your dwelling place. . .*"
 - a. It was created by Him. Gen 1.1
 - b. It is His home. Jn 14.2 "*In my fathers house are many mansions. . .*"
 - * If it is His home then He can decide who He wants to come in!
 - c. The New Heaven will be His Holy City. Rev 22.3-4 "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face,"
2. Christ presently lives there. Acts 1.9 "...He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'"
 - Hebrew 9.24 "Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, ... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"

Remember, heaven was not foreign to Jesus. He is the only one to live on earth after He had lived in heaven. As believers, you and I will live in heaven after time on earth, but Jesus was different. He knew heaven before He came to earth.

3. Holy Spirit lives there too. Ps. 139.7 *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?"* ⁸ *If I ascend into heaven, You are there;*

The whole trinity, Godhead, was present in heaven in Gen 1.26 when He said, *"Let us make man in our image..."*

4. Angels and other beings reside there Matt. 18.10 *"...do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."*

Luke 2.13 *"a great multitude of heavenly hosts"* ¹⁵ *"when the angels had gone away from them into heaven..."*

5. The justified live there after life on earth. Hebrews 12.22 *"you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven"*

Jn 14.3 *"... if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Paul also tells us in 2 Cor 5 that to be *"absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."*

3. Lets look at some of the positive characteristics of heaven.

Joy Luke 15:7, 10 *"... there will be more joy in heaven. . ."*

Lk 15 gives 3 parables of lost things. In all three when "the lost" is found a party is thrown. Jesus is explaining that the same is true of heaven. Who could imagine that the actions of men could have such a profound impact on heaven?

ILL. On the stroke of midnight, within the first few moments of the new year, people stopped and celebrated. Why? It was only time passing, another year; another number to remember to change.

We know of only one thing that makes Heaven burst in to party mode, pour the punch, string the streamers, and throw the confetti: A sinner being saved. We could do better at rejoicing here in preparation for our time there.

Rest Hebrew 4.9; Rev. 14.13

While there will be work in heaven, it will not lead to a lack of rest. As in the Garden of Eden, they had work from the beginning, but it was not until after the fall that they had "toil."

I think we will live stress free lives, and that will be a major part of our "rest."

Peace and comfort Luke 16.19-25 (*Rich man and Lazarus*)

Again the lack of stress will play a major role here. We will not worry, be uncomfortable, or uneasy about anything. There will be no guilt, no crying, no sense of loss.

Righteousness 2 Pet. 3.13 *"we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

Because it is the place of God, and all believers will be "clothed in Christ's righteousness" everything done there will be right. We will be incapable of sinning, turning away from God, or wanting anything against His righteous standard.

Service Rev 7.15 *“they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple”*

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus told His disciples that they would sit on twelve thrones and serve as judges of Israel. In the Bible, judges were also administrators, which suggests that there will be more work to do in God’s new kingdom. In the parable of the stewards (*Matthew 25*), the reward for faithful work was the opportunity for more work.

Reward Matt. 5.11-12; 2 Corinthians 5.10; 1 Corinthians 4.5; Rev. 2.11, 17, 26-28; 3.5, 12, 21

There will be crowns, positions of honour, and other as of yet unspecified rewards.

Inheritance Mt 25.34 *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”*

1 Pet. 1.4 *“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven”*

This is one inheritance you get when you die.

See also Col 3.24

Glory Rom. 8:16 *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Feasting Rev.2.17; 19.9 *‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’*

The “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” is a 7 year feast that takes place in heaven during the tribulation period. Because our bodies will be incorruptible, we will not get fat, have heart problems, diabetes, and I am not sure we will even get uncomfortably full. WOW!

4. Some of the things lacking in heaven are:

Marriage	Matt. 22:30
Death	Luke 20:36
Flesh and blood	1 Cor. 15:50
Imperishable	1 Cor. 15:42, 50
Sorrow	Rev. 7:17
Pain	Rev. 21:4
The Curse	Rev. 22:3
Night	Rev. 22:5
Wicked people	Rev. 22:15
Drought	Rev. 22.2
End	Matt. 25:46; Rev. 22:5

5. Entrance into heaven is controlled.

1. Entrance to heaven is only for those who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour.

John 14.6 *“Jesus said ..., “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

2. Entrance to heaven takes place at one of two times.

A. After death, believers are home with the Lord.

Philippians 1.21-23 “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. ... ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is far better.*”

2 Corinthians 5.8 “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*”

What happens when a believer dies? We learn that their death is gain. To die is to be with Christ. It is far better than our life here. It is to be desired. Now we know that when a believer dies, their body (shell) is buried in the ground and they will not receive a new, glorified body until the resurrection. In the meantime, their soul is with Christ. Since Christ is in heaven, the believer is also in heaven. We call this the intermediate state. The clearest teaching on this is in **2 Corinthians 5.1-10**.

So when a believers dies, they are at home with the Lord in heaven. But that is not their ultimate end; there will be more of heaven to experience.

B. At Christ’s return, believers will receive glorified bodies to be with Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 “*this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then 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.*”

This passage teaches us the sequence of our entrance into heaven. When Jesus returns, those who died will rise first, now with glorified bodies. Those who are living at that time will be caught up with them, and 1 Corinthians 15 teaches that they too will be changed in an instant.

So whether by resurrection or transformation, we will enter heaven, united with the believers from ages past, and united with the Lord forever.

Conclusion: Great, you say. Sounds like a wonderful place. But how does knowing that help me this week? What should be the believer’s present attitude toward heaven?

1. Earnestly desires it! 2 Cor. 5:2 “*For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. . .*” Phil 1.23 “. . . *to be with Christ, which is far better...*”

“A few nights ago, after many objections and countless groans, the girls were finally in their gowns, in their beds, and on their pillows. I slipped into the room to give them a final kiss. Andrea, the five-year-old was still awake, just barely, but awake. After I kissed her, she lifted her eyelids one final time and said, “can’t wait until I wake up.”

Oh, for the attitude of a five-year-old! That simple uncluttered passion for living that can’t wait for tomorrow. A philosophy of life that reads, “Play hard, laugh hard, and leave the worries to your father.” A bottomless well of optimism flooded by a perpetual spring of faith. Is it any wonder Jesus said we must have the heart of a child before we can enter the kingdom of heaven?” author - Lucado, Max, And the angels were silent, Multnomah, Portland, Or., 1992, Page 111.

“Who gets excited about climbing into the world many wake up to? Deadlines upon traffic jams upon grumpy bosses and crowded streets. Keeping your head to the pillow is much more appealing than keeping your shoulder to the wheel.” Ibid

“I can’t wait to wake up,” are the words of a child’s faith. The reason Andrea can say them is because her world is simple. She plays hard, she laughs much, and she leaves the worries to her father. Let’s do the same.” ibid

2. Look for it!

Titus 2.13 “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”

2 Pet. 3:14 *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless*”

We need to live like we are looking for the eminent return of Christ. Are the things I am doing the things that I would like to be snatched from and instantly be in the presence of God?

3. Put treasure there!

Matthew 6:19-20: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ..."*

“Would you really rather have a few possessions on earth than eternal possessions in heaven? Would you really choose a life of slavery to passion over a life of freedom? Would you honestly give up all of your heavenly mansions for a second-rate sleazy motel on earth?”

Jesus said, “Great is your reward in heaven.” He must have smiled when He said that line. His eyes must have danced, and His hand must have pointed skyward.

For He should know. It was His idea. It was His home.” Lucado, Max, *The applause of heaven*, Word Pub., Dallas, 1996, Page 190