

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Intermediate Heaven, Pt 2

Selected Passages

Keywords: Heaven, Resurrection, Judgment Seat, Millennial Kingdom, Eternity, Intermediate Heaven

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

Sermon Audio Blurb: At this point in time in God's program, believers who die are immediately brought into the presence of Jesus Christ, while their bodies remain in the grave. The next major event is the Second Advent of Jesus Christ where the Church, both living and dead, shall meet Him and be with Him forevermore. However, the eternal state of a New Heaven & Earth does not come at that point. Rather, it is the millennial reign of Christ over the earth. And the entire Church will be with Christ, in our resurrected bodies, serving and ruling on the earth. During this time, there will also be a time of judgment for the believers.

I. Introduction.

- A. We come again to the subject of heaven, specifically the nature of what we are calling the "intermediate heaven."
 - 1. You may recall that I put up a simple illustration of how heaven appears to function in the bible. "Three Places of Rest for Believers in Different Times."
 - a. Paradise was where a believer's soul would go **prior** to the ascension of Jesus Christ. Also, likely this is what the term "Abraham's bosom" speak of as well.
 - b. Heaven is where the believer's soul resides **now** that Christ is ascended. **The key point here is that the soul is with Christ.**
 - c. New Heaven & Earth is the final destiny for all believers and involves the body and soul of each person. This is the final stage of "heaven." This will be our final sermon, LW, next week.
- B. But it is in the intermediate state that there are different ways that we experience heaven.
 - 1. For all who die as believers, their souls are in the presence of Christ immediately. But not their bodies.
 - 2. The body awaits a specific event, which when it occurs, brings about the resurrection of their bodies and they are reunited with their souls.
 - 3. The return of Jesus Christ is that key event.

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- C. Two challenges.
 - 1. Complexity of the subjects.
 - 2. Controversy of the subjects.
 - 3. Simple counsel from your pastor: Have your bibles open and make certain you are looking at each passage. This is most important for those here who think I may be in error in some part of what I am teaching. Let the Word of God be our guide.

II. The Final Stage of Intermediate Heaven.

- A. The return of Christ.
 - 1. The promise (Acts 1:9-11).
 - a. The key point here is that the unfolding of Christ's kingdom takes part over two separate comings.
 - b. Matthew 16:27, *"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay each one according to his deeds."*
 - 2. The problem.
 - a. Now it is here that there are some opinions that differ from one another.
 - b. What is important to understand is how the millennium relates to the second coming. They are inextricably linked.
 - (1) Preterism (focus on "past fulfillment").
 - (a) The second coming has already happened in some ways, only the physical return is yet future.
 - (b) There is no physical reign on earth for Jesus Christ. Most judgment has already occurred, some still in future.

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- (2) Postmillennialism.
 - (a) Millennium: Not a 1000 year reign. Rather, the world gradually improves as the gospel spreads to overcome the world.
 - (b) Second Coming: Happens after the Millennium, once the gospel has succeeded worldwide. Then comes judgment and eternity.
 - (3) Amillennialism.
 - (a) Millennium: Symbolic of the current church age between Christ's first and second comings.
 - (b) Second Coming: A single future event at the very end of history that immediately ushers in the eternal state.
 - (c) Judgments: One general resurrection and final judgment for all people the Second Coming.
 - (4) Premillennialism.
 - (a) Millennium: A literal, future 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ on earth with glorified saints.
 - (b) Second Coming: Occurs at the beginning of the Millennium.
 - (c) Judgments: Multiple judgments, some at the beginning and some at the end.
3. This return of Christ is to be the focus of our hope as believers (Titus 2:11-14).
- a. Vs 11:
 - b. Vs 12:
 - c. Vs :
 - d. Vs 14:
4. Revelation 19:11-16 describes the second coming.
- B. The resurrection.

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1. 1 Corinthians 15:22-29.
 2. 1 Corinthians 15:52-57.
 3. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.
 - a. Here we have the clear order of events.
 - b. Christ returns → The dead in Christ → the alive in Christ.
 - c. Note how the key point is that we will then “always be with the Lord.”
 - d. Comfort one another — present imperative.
 4. A quick summary of where we are at. Revelation 20:1-6.
 - a. Jesus returns in Revelation 19.
 - b. We are raised and changed as He comes. He is with His holy angels and His Church.
 - c. Christ reigns for 1,000 years and we with Him.
- C. The judgment seat of the saints.
1. During this time there will be judgment for the Church, often called the “bema seat judgment.” You and I will be raised and we will be judged, not as to the state of our souls but of what we have done as believers.
 2. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10: Note the objects of this judgment.
 - a. The context is not about all of mankind but only concerned with those who are Christians in 4:16 to 5:10.
 - b. In addition note the ‘we’ of vss 8-9 and the ‘we’ of vs 10.
 - c. Also remember the truths of Romans 5 and 8.
 - (1) **But God** demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:8-9)
 - (2) **Therefore** there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)
 3. 1 Corinthians 3:9-15.

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- a. Primarily focused on leaders & teachers but would include all believers in one way or another.
 - b. There will be a suffering of loss. Salvation is secured but opportunities will be lost, which is part of the final point.
- D. The co-reigning of the saints.
- 1. How we reign and what is the extent of each of our responsibilities likely will be tied to the rewards given.
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 8:2-3.
 - 3. 2 Timothy 2:12.
 - 4. Revelation 3:21.
 - 5. Revelation 20:4-5.

III. Conclusion.

- A. This is what heaven is as well and I suspect it is not something most of you have contemplated. This is not sitting on some cloud with a harp strumming away. It is not just a floating in the presence of God gazing at Him for all eternity.
- B. The millennium is the final part of the intermediate heaven.
 - 1. When you put this all together it is something quite exciting and worth anticipating.
 - a. Every believer here will be changed already.
 - b. We will no longer be subject to temptation or sin.
 - c. Our minds will no longer be limited due to sin and weakness.
 - d. Righteousness will not merely be declared about us, but it will make up our existence. We will be righteous.
 - 2. It is something none of us have experienced and not all in the millennium will experience it the same. There will be three groups present, unbelievers, believers and glorified saints.

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3. The removal of Satan will bring about an incredible time of peace.
 4. The nations shall still exist and the nations shall come to Jerusalem to learn and to worship Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will reign physically in Jerusalem fulfilling all of the promises made about the throne of David.
 - a. His reign is absolute, characterized by perfect justice, righteousness, and a “rod of iron” (swift judgment on rebellion).
 - b. **Isaiah 9:6-7**: *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this.”*
 5. Nature is renewed: the curse on the ground is lifted, the earth becomes highly productive, and even animals live in harmony. Longevity increases dramatically for those in natural bodies.
 - a. Sin and death still exist. But they do not have the power like now. Lives are long and one who dies at 100 will be considered an youth in Isaiah 65:20-25.
 - b. The curse upon the ground given in Genesis 3 is gone and nature explodes in a beauty and productivity never seen before.
- C. And yet, in all of this wondrous beauty, it is not the final state of things.
1. Our enemies, Sin, Satan, and Death still exist and must be dealt with.
 2. And so we will wait even then, for the final work of our God, the remaking of all things known as the New Heaven & Earth.

Benediction

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, comfort you in all your afflictions, so that you may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which you yourself have been comforted by God. Amen.