



HEAVEN

Week 5 - How Can I Be Happy in Heaven (with All Those Raiders Fans in Hell?)

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

ERITREA

We pray for the church leaders and pastors in Eritrea; life is so risky for them. Being a ministry leader in Eritrea can easily get you thrown into prison or cost you your life.

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Eric Cobb and Grace Covenant Church.

Closing prayer

Heaven is clearly a created place. And it will come down and unite with this present earth to become the New Earth.

In last week's sermon I was trying to emphasize that Isaiah 65 points us ahead to a time when creation will be liberated from the curse.

Recap of the New Earth in the context of Isaiah 65:

Isaiah 65:17-20

17 "For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.
20 No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,

- It's a parallelism

- It's poetic
- It's emphasizes 100 years

This is another way of saying in the New Earth they will find the completion of their lives. Why? Because we're talking about life eternal. You can't get more complete regarding life than eternal life. Let me paraphrase this, "The lives of infants and old people will not be cut short."

No one's life will be cut short. That's what the line about a young man dying is emphasizing.

We know that in heaven no one is going to die. So, what can this mean? "For the young man shall die a hundred years old." It can't mean that young men will just live longer on the New Earth, can it? So, what's the point about the 100 year old young men?

The number 10 in Scripture (10 Commandments, 10 Plagues, The Passover lamb was to be sacrificed on the 10th day of the first month (Exodus 12:3) - 10 is a number that points to completion. The number 100 falls into the category of 10, so 100 is seen as a complete lifespan, something most of us fail to reach on this old earth, but will never fail to

reach on the New Earth. That's the idea behind the line:

for the young man shall die a hundred years old,

If that were possible. It's kind of like saying, "The young man shall die when his life is complete." But life on the New Earth is the ultimate completeness of days or never ending days. Let me paraphrase it this way, "The young man will live a complete life." Does that make sense?

But let me point this out, you're not young when you're 100. So, how can a young man die at 100? By definition, that's an old man, not a young one. But that's the point. This is highlighting the completeness of life on the New Earth.

and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

This is another way of saying even in the completeness of days (or never ending days) the unrepentant sinner remains condemned.

MYTH #8 - You can't be happy in heaven knowing loved ones are in hell.

Now, I speak of this as someone who's dad died when I was eleven years old. I don't know if my father was a Christian or not. I have one possible story that he became one shortly before he died, but I do not know for sure because it was too soon to tell. You know them by their fruit and there wasn't enough time for his conversion to be confirmed.

And all throughout my mother's life, even as she professed faith in Christ at times, she mostly seemed like a ship tossed about by every wind of doctrine. There's just not enough solid evidence for me to say either way.

Now, I may get to heaven and be wonderfully surprised to find them both there. But then again, I may not. But I have no doubts about being happy in heaven, even without memory loss.

FACT: Because all His ways are just, God will be glorified in salvation through judgment.

We will give God glory in the full knowledge of all His judgments because all His ways are just. He doesn't have to hide anything from us.

NEW SAYING: In heaven we will give glory to God for everything, even hell.

In other words, we will always take God's side. (In heaven, you will be partial to God.)

What I find disturbing about the memory loss theory, this idea that God will just wipe the memory of any of your loved ones in hell from your mind, is that it implies that if you knew the full truth about God in heaven you still wouldn't be content with Him. There's no getting around it. That's what this theory implies. It's saying that God has to hide something from us that we wouldn't approve of.

It's basically saying that God has done something that He has to erase from our memories because we can't give Him glory for doing it.

That's how many of us feel about hell. We just kind of put in the back of our minds, because we still can't quite grasp how hell is warranted.

Now, the problem with that is that Scripture says:

Deuteronomy 32:4

4 "His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice."

Psalms 18:30

30 This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the Lord proves true;

And that includes hell.

God's holiness is revealed in judgment. What we fail to realize because we are so connected to this life and the people in our lives is that not only will our mindsets be transformed in heaven, but our entire beings will be gloriously transformed. The perishable will put on the imperishable. We will be completely fit for heaven, which means our minds made perfect will see things differently than when they were marred by sin.

Minds made perfect doesn't mean we will know all things. We will never know all things, even in heaven. We'll always be learning and growing and discovering the wonders of who God is.

Presently, you're an acorn. One day you will be an oak tree. But that's hard for us to

imagine, so we come up with concepts like the memory erase theory, which has absolutely no biblical basis. It is strictly an emotionally based theory. Every verse about the judgment displays we will have implicit memory, total recall.

Matthew 25:31-32

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And all throughout this account of the sheep and the goats we will know who the goats are and why they're goats, Tom Brady notwithstanding. And we'll know who the sheep are and why they're the sheep. There is no hint of memory loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

There is no gasp of horror from the saints and angels here. There is no thought of God having to wipe our memories to make His judgment acceptable to us.

46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Here's what we fail to realize. In heaven our minds will be in full sympathy with God. Do you believe that? Presently, our minds are not in fully sympathy with God because we are fallen and sinful. There is a struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil in how we think. That's why we even entertain the idea that we might not be happy in heaven if a loved one is in hell.

But when your mind is in fully sympathy with God, all your emotions will finally line-up with biblical revelation. You will have the same view of the impenitent (or the goats) at the judgment seat of Christ as God, whether they are strangers or relatives. Your mental and emotional state will be in full sync with Scripture.

Romans 2:5-8

5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

That's why God will not hide His judgment of anyone from you, because His judgment is righteous judgment.

6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

- **Why judgment is distasteful in our culture — the age of authenticity — you have to find out who you are and be true to yourself**
- **In other cultures, the judgment of God is actually comforting.**

Romans 12:19

19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

In heaven, your heart and your mind, now untainted by sin, will be in complete unity with God. You will know as you are known. This is about intimacy with God, not being all-knowing. I’ve already emphasized that you’ll be growing and learning all throughout eternity. Who can come to the end of an infinite God? The point is that the biblical evidence says that when you are in heaven

will give glory to God even for His judgment upon those who are cast into hell.

Isaiah 66:22-24

22 “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make

shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

23 From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord.

24 “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

If that’s not clear enough, in John’s Revelation the citizens of heaven are told to rejoice when God judges the wicked inhabitants of Babylon.

Revelation 18:20

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

“Once sin is removed from my life... and I love the Lord my God with all of my heart and all of my soul in undiluted perfection, my

compassion, my love, my concern will be much more for the vindication of God's holiness than for a corrupt fallen kinsmen of mine." (R.C. Sproul)

To make an issue out of remembering our loved ones is to make heaven about us rather than the glory of God.

In his book on heaven, pastor John MacArthur writes, "We live in a narcissistic culture, and it shows in these accounts of people who claim they've been to heaven. They sound as if they've viewed paradise in a mirror, keeping themselves in the foreground. They say comparatively little about the glory of God, the very centerpiece of heaven. But all of them have a lot to say about how good they felt — how peaceful, how happy, how comforted they were; how they received privileges and accolades; how fun and enlightening their experience was; and how many things they think they now understand perfectly that could never be gleaned from Scripture alone. In short, they glorify self while barely noticing God's glory. They highlight everything but what's truly important about heaven."

What he's saying is that in these been-to-heaven-and-back bestsellers, we do not encounter a grand view of heaven nor a grand view of the God of heaven, because they're all man-centered. They're about us. Frankly, it's the same thing with this fear of not enjoying heaven with loved ones in hell. That is an issue tied to our current emotional state.

It doesn't take into consideration that in heaven we will be in complete sympathy with God. The heart of the Christian always justifies God. We do not take the side of those who condemn God. Jesus taught that your love for Him should be stronger, more powerful, more influential, than your love for anyone else in the world, be it father or mother or sister or brother.

Now, when we love Jesus, we become better husbands and fathers and wives and mothers and children. But that's how we're supposed to love the Lord on this earth. We not only have a problem doing that here, but we have a problem even imagining it. That's why we have these emotional issues with heaven that often override the biblical evidence.

Again, God's judgment in the New Testament is not mentioned with any qualifications or

any apologies, because it is good news to persecuted Christians.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

J.I. Packer, in his book *Knowing God*, reminds us that the doctrine of God's judgment isn't primarily about scaring people into believing or behaving, "but its main thrust is as a revelation of the moral character of God... Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally. Judgment means that in the end God's will will be perfectly done."

"God's holy righteousness will hereby be revealed; God will be doing the right thing, vindicating himself at last against all who have defied him. . . . (Read through [Matt. 25](#); [John 5:22-29](#); [Rom. 2:5-16](#), [12:19](#); [2 Thess. 1:7-9](#); [Rev. 18:1-19:3](#), [20:11-35](#), and you will see that clearly.) God will judge justly, and all angels, saints, and martyrs will praise him

for it. So it seems inescapable that we shall, with them, approve the judgment of persons—rebels—whom we have known and loved.

Hell itself may provide a dark backdrop to God's shining glory and unfathomable grace. Jonathan Edwards made this case, saying, "When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it." He added, "They shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned." (Randy Alcorn)

History is moving toward a goal — the judgment seat of Christ. That's history's final stop. We not only worship God because He is love, but we worship Him because He is Judge and the judge of all the earth will do right.

Everyone knows in the depth of their soul that they deserve to be judged by God because He created them. As Creator He gets to tell us what would be best for us. He gets to tell us how to live. But we deny Him. That's the

nature of sin. Sinners needs a Savior.
Thankfully, our Judge is also our Savior.

John 5:22-23

22 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, **23** that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.