

The Hope of Heaven - Colossians 1:5

Introduction

For most of us here, we are at that age, where we are seemingly seeing more deaths than births in our lives. That may not be technically true, but it sure feels that way. A few years ago, for me a decade or two ago, it was our parents, aunts and uncles that were going the way of the earth, now it be us, it is our turn. And after us, our kids, and such is the stuff of life.

Just take a look at our congregation over the last couple of years or so; we lost Bob a while back, he always sat in the with Leqh, our original greeter, Jimmy sat here up in the front, Miss Dotty was over here to the side, and it seems like yesterday we lost John and Nancy so close to each other, most recently our brother Curtis and, of course Sue's beloved, Carey. I'm sure there are many more and for all them, mentioned and unmentioned, their departure leaves a huge void in our lives, I can still see them in their seats here at church . . .

While difficult for us who remain behind, we know it is glorious for them, they are with Jesus . . .

To some it may sound trite to say 'they are with Jesus', but for the Believer I don't think that we have any greater hope than to be with Christ, or at least we shouldn't. If there is a greater hope than being in heaven with God, then I would be concerned that not only is your hope misplaced, but that your desire for Him is not foremost in your heart and that other things may be the object of your love.

Rightly placed, the desire to be with God is and should be the greatest hope of any Believer. To be with Jesus, I mean to really be with Jesus; to see Him, to touch Him, to be held by Him, to really, really know Him and experience Him in His unfiltered fullness. I can only imagine . . .

Scripture makes it very clear, this is not our home. Believers are pilgrims and sojourners in this life and on this earth, just passing through until our eternal reward, which is the hope of heaven and life forever with God. But this life and this time is not without purpose, we are called to occupy and redeem our time here in our temporal experience on this celestial ball.

We'll talk more about this later, but right now let's talk about Heaven . . .

Jesus and Heaven

Jesus spoke frequently of Heaven, the whole Gospel of Matthew is devoted the Kingdom of Heaven, its coming and what it is like in parables, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like . . ." He also speaks to where our hearts should be and what awaits the Believer in Heaven, treasures and rewards.

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, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

While the Saints of the Old Testament looked forward to eternity, the Old Testament does not speak to 'heaven' as a place to where the dead believers go. The words of Jesus regarding heaven were seemingly a new revelation of heaven, especially when He said this to the disciples . . .

John 14:1-4 – "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

A promise to the Disciples and a promise for the Believer, the Hope of Heaven . . .

The Hope of Heaven

Colossians 1:5 – "Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

- Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven . . .
 - The hope of heaven, not unique to the Believer . . .
 - Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die . . .
 - The unbeliever is hoping they will go to heaven, they have no assurance of heaven, their hope is no hope at all . . .
 - The Believer has a hope, an assurance, a hope that is laid up for us . . .

Romans 8:23-25 – “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

- For in this hope we were saved, the hope of heaven . . .
- That is forever with God . . .
- Speaking of heaven . . .

What is Heaven?

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *šāmayim* is the primary word translated as heaven. This word is defined as “region above the earth: the heavens: place of the stars, sky, air; heaven: the invisible realm of God.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word *ouranos* is the primary word translated as heaven. This word is defined as “sky, air, firmament, any area above the earth; heaven(s), the place of sun, moon, and stars; heaven, in which God dwells.”

The primary Biblical view is that of three heavens; two in the physical realm, the sky and space, and the dwelling place of God.

Matthew 6:26 – “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

- The first heaven - The word ‘air’ here is *ouranos*, or heaven, referring to the earth’s atmosphere. It is a physical place, a part of the natural world.

Psalm 19:1 – “To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”

- The second heaven - The word ‘heavens’ here is *šāmayim*, referring to the celestial bodies, these heavens being visible to humans.

Psalm 11:4 – “The Lord is in His holy temple, The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.”

Psalm 103:19 – “The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.”

Isaiah 66:1 – “Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?”

II Corinthians 12:2-4 – “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

- The third heaven – The supernatural realm where God dwells.
- And this is the heaven where our hope is laid up . . .
- The heavenly abode of God . . .

Heaven on Earth

I know this sounds obvious, but we don't start in Heaven, we start here on earth. But that being said, our heavenly experience begins here on earth. The day you received Jesus Christ, you entered the Kingdom of Heaven.

Colossians 1:13 – “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love . . .”

- We were once under the power of darkness, now we have been translated to the Kingdom of the Son of His love, the Kingdom of Heaven . . .

Philippians 3:20-21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

- So now we are citizens of heaven, we are identified with heaven, heaven is our home, even while we are here on earth . . .

Matthew 16:21 – “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

- We have treasures and rewards waiting in Heaven for us based on the things we have done here on earth . . .
- We spoke to redeeming and occupying our time here on earth, we are rewarded accordingly . . .

Ephesians 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

- And in the here and now, every blessing we have emanates from Heaven . . .
- Everything we have and everything we are, are spiritual blessings flowing down from Heaven above . . .
- All our praise goes up and His love comes down . . .

Ephesians 2:4-7 – “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- Not only are we going to heaven, but God also sees us seated in heaven with Christ . . .
- You may not realize it, but right here, right now, God sees you seated in the heavenlies . . .

What is Heaven Like?

Scripture does not give us a lot of information about what heaven is like, but there are a few things we do know about heaven . . .

I Peter 1:3-5 – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil

or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

- We have an inheritance waiting in Heaven for us, as co-heirs with Christ . . .
- In heaven, everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to us . . .

I Corinthians 15:51-53 – "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

I John 3:2 – "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

- We know that we will experience Heaven with new glorified bodies . . .
- I think this something we are all looking forward to; no more creaking, aching and breaking bones . . .
- I'm wondering what the next body part is going to be repaired or replaced . . .

Matthew 22:30 – "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven."

- In some ways we will be like angels . . .
- Maybe because of the marriage reference, this could be speaking to sexuality or the lack thereof . . .
- Being in heaven, there is no need to go forth and multiply, if you know what I mean . . .

Revelation 21:4 – "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

- The pain and sorrow of this life will be left behind . . .
- In this life you will have tribulation, for all the joys and wonders we have in this life, there is also a trail of pain and tears . . .

Revelation 7:9-11 – “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.”

- Believers from every nation and angels will praise God together . . .
- Of all the spiritual disciplines that the Believer experiences, the worship of God is about as close as we get to the heavenly experience . . .
- When we worship, we lift our voices and our hearts to God, our emotions rise to the heavens and the cares of this world disappear . . .
- In lifting holy hands, we exalt Him and reach to the heavens as if we can touch Him . . .
- And one day we will worship with all the saints and the heavenly hosts, singing “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.”

Revelation 21:21-23 – “The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”

- The pearly gates and streets paved with gold . . .
- The Lamb is its Temple and the Lamb is its light . . .

A pastor shared this story while giving a message on heaven, about a man that asked God if he could bring one of his earthly possessions with him when he got to heaven. So as one of his rewards, God allowed him to bring one possession. When he got to heaven, St. Peter was waiting for him at the pearly gate. Peter noticed the trunk the man was bringing into heaven, so he asked him to open it up so he could see what he was bringing in. When he opened the trunk, it glowed

brilliantly filled with gold. Peter looked at him and asked, ‘So you are bringing in concrete?’

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 – “For 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. Then 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

- And thus we shall always be with the Lord, we will be with the Lord forever . . .
- Therefore comfort one another with these words . . .

Maybe the best description of heaven is a non-description . . .

1 Corinthians 2:9 – “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

- This we know to be true . . .
 - Everything will be perfect . . .
 - Everything will be right . . .
 - And we will be with Jesus . . .
 - We will be with the Lord forever . . .
 - Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Going Home

When it comes to Heaven, we know and we don’t know, and like the song, ‘I can only imagine’ . . .

And whatever we can imagine, it will not remotely compare to what God has in store for us.

- Are you ready to go home?
 - Can we say along with Simeon, “Now you are letting your servant depart in peace . . .”
 - He was ready . . .

- There are two extremes for the Christian when it comes to dying and going to Heaven . . .
 - On one hand, some of us are holding on to this life so tightly that we don't want to let go . . .
 - Often saying, I am not ready, I'm not done yet, or I have more to do here . . .
 - This kind of thinking is not our call, it is not up to us . . .
 - And at its worse, this kind of thinking can border on idolatry . . .
 - Who and what are the objects of our love . . .
 - On the other hand, we can be so anxious to go home, that we forget our purpose here on earth . . .
 - Being so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good . . .
 - And of course you have everything in between . . .
 - I have been guilty of both . . .
 - Wanting to stay and wanting to go . . .
 - Like the song, 'should I stay or should I go now . . .'
- Paul gives us the best perspective regarding heaven and earth . . .

Philippians 1:21-24 – “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

- Paul's ultimate desire is to be with Christ, but he knows that he remains here on earth for the benefit of others and by the will of God.
- The reality is, we are here until God determines otherwise . . .
- Redeem and occupy your time, knowing we are not here for ourselves but for others and the purposes of God.

I heard a wise once say, 'For the Believer, this time on earth is as bad as it is going to get, but for the non-believer their time on earth is as good as it is going to get.'

We cannot have a conversation about Heaven without speaking about the alternative, hell.

- Scripture makes it abundantly clear, that the only way to God and Heaven is through the person of Jesus Christ.

John 14:5-7 – “Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

I John 5:11-13 – “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

- Heaven is promised only to those who have placed their faith in the person of Jesus Christ . . .
- The Believer, and only the Believer, has the hope and assurance of heaven, eternity with God . . .

The hope of the non-believer is no hope at all . . .

- The hope of the non-believer is a hope based on their best guess . . .
- They have no foundation for what they believe, their position is hopeless, they are hopeless whether they know it or not . . .
- The hard truth is, if you are not going to heaven, you are going to hell.
- You do not want to be on the wrong side of this one . . .

Returning to our key verse . . .

Colossians 1:5 – “Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”

- Saints, Heaven is ours because we heard the word of the truth of the gospel.
- And how are the lost and hopeless of this world going to know the way and go to Heaven?
- The same way we did, they need to hear the word of the gospel . . .

Romans 10:14-17 – “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

- Not all of us are preachers, not all of us are teachers or evangelists, but we are all called to give an answer for the hope that is us . . .
- We have the answer of heaven for those who are bound for hell . . .
- We have the answer of life for those who are dead . . .
- We have the answer of hope for the hopeless and the lost . . .
- Heaven is not a secret to be kept to ourselves, it is too wonderful for that . . .
- We should be handing out invitations, E tickets, to heaven . . .

This is redeeming and occupying our time in its truest sense . . .

Our day is approaching, every day is one closer to seeing our Savior face to face.

- No more tears, no more pain . . .
- Every question will be answered . . .
- Everything will be perfect and right . . .
- Because . . .

When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus
We'll sing and shout the victory