

## Heaven

### **Questions about Heaven (2)**

Colossians 3:1-4

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HDBC

**Wrapping up** this series on Heaven. Important topic. It is mentioned in 54 of the 66 books of the Bible. Found 70 times in Matthew alone. Moses, David, Solomon, Paul, Peter and John all spoke or wrote about heaven. The truth about heaven is woven throughout the Bible, from the first book to the last.

**Paul instructs** us to think about heaven, to ponder it, to live with an awareness that heaven is real. Keeping our minds on heaven will help us keep our priorities straight. Keeping our minds of heaven will help us make wise choices.

#### **Read Colossians 3:1-4**

**We have** only scratched the surface of this subject. I hope it has encouraged you to search the scriptures for more insight on heaven, and that this has given you a hunger not only to be there, but also to help others get there as well.

**Last week** I used the time to consider eight questions that many of you have asked about heaven. I want to continue that same process today and deal with an additional six questions. Some, heavy and some light.

#### **1. Will Everyone Go to Heaven?**

Even many believers seem to be confused at this point. The Bible is clear. Not everyone is going to heaven. Consider the following verses.

*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.* Matt 7:13-14

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, **he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"* John 3:3

**It is the plain** teaching of Scripture that not everyone is going to be saved. The belief that everyone will get there is one of the most dangerous heresies!

## 2. Will There Be Animals in Heaven?

The Bible tells us that there were animals in the Garden of Eden. This was an earthly paradise. It was perfect. That perfect place contained animals. I believe the new Heaven and earth will be a recreation of the original earth. If that is true, certainly there will be animals.

**Animals were** an important part of God's creation. They offer testimony to the creative genius of God. The millennium is a time on earth which somewhat mirrors what heaven will ultimately be like. During that time the lion and lamb will be friends. The cobras will no longer be a threat to children. Animals will no longer eat one another, nor be a threat to people.

Rom 8:19-23

*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

*For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

**This speaks** of the deliverance of the whole creation. The burned-out planets, the barren deserts, and the fallen humanity, all of God's creation will be delivered. This indicates that the whole of God's creation will be delivered, and that would certainly include animals.

**There is no specific** evidence in Scripture that any particular animals will be resurrected, such as personal pets. However, Joni Earickson Tada and Hank Hannegraft both acknowledge that possibility. Again, there is no Biblical evidence to support this, but the loving nature of God certainly makes this a possibility.

### 3. Can a Person Who Commits Suicide Go to Heaven?

This is one of the most often asked questions about heaven. Many people believe that suicide is the unpardonable sin. Their belief in that is based upon a faulty understanding of salvation.

**They believe** that when they trust Jesus He forgives all of their past sins. Any sins that they commit in the future have to be confessed in order to be forgiven. Suicide is a sin. Because it leads to death, the person has no opportunity to repent. Therefore they cannot go to Heaven.

**This is not true.** When Jesus saves and forgives you he does so completely. He not only forgives your past sins but your future sins. Remember that at the time of His death, all of your sins were in the future.

**Why then** do we need to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness? Not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Not in order to maintain our relationship but because our relationship is maintained. **Fellowship**.

**What about suicide?** Not God's plan. God is the giver of life. The time of death should be left in His hands. But, it is not the unpardonable sin. How could a believer ever commit suicide? Emotional or mental distress.

Remember the promise of Romans 8:1

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

### 4. What will heaven be like?

We think of us going to heaven. Moving from what we know to what we don't know. Leaving here and going there. Assumption is that it must be totally different! But remember what God has promised. He will re-create heavens and the earth.

**Re-creation, sounds** a lot like resurrection. What is true of **resurrection** (that when I am resurrected I will be the same person that I am now, only better) will be true of **re-creation**. It will be the same earth, only better.

**John saw** the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven to the new earth. In the coming age, heaven will come to the new earth.

**Randy Alcorn** rightly points out that there will be a uniting of heaven and earth (the new earth) as one. There will be no separation between heaven and earth at that point. Keep something in mind . . . it has always been God's plan to unite heaven and earth. Listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 1.

*He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the right time.—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.*

**This corresponds** perfectly with what we see in Revelation 21. The will be a merging together of what have been separate realms (heaven and earth).

**Just as God** and people are reconciled in Christ, so the dwelling places of God and people will be reconciled in Christ in a permanent reality. There will be no more gulf between the spiritual and physical worlds.

### **So, what will this new, reconciled heaven and earth be like?**

**It will be much** like the current earth but without the effects of sin. We can see hints of what it will be like, for all the beauty and benefits have not been totally marred or erased.

**Every joy** on earth is a whisper of a greater joy. The Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountains, Serengeti Plain, the rain forests, the coral reefs, and the Alps are all but rough sketches of the New Earth. Things we enjoy in this life . . . taking a walk with a friend, enjoying a cup of coffee, engaging in competitive sports, enjoying the arts, music, drama and so much more.

**I believe** the very features that make earth so wonderful and beautiful will be resurrected and be a part of the new earth. But this will not be all there is. We will have the entire universe, and possibly more to explore and enjoy.

**We've never** seen men and women as they were intended to be. We've never seen animals or plant life the way there were intended to be. We've never enjoyed music, arts, drama without the effects of sin. We have only seen the charred remnants of once was, and of what one day will be again.

**Think about** the little that we have learned about the universe. We have only begun to learn about the planets and space objects closest to the earth. There certainly must be so much more out there that we have not discovered. We will have time and ability to do so when heaven and earth are one.

## 5. Will We Meet Infants Who Have Died?

We know that we will be reunited with our loved ones who were believers but who have died. But what about babies? Great question.

**Let's be clear** that children are born with a sin nature. The Bible teaches that we come into this world lost and that we remain lost until we make a faith decision to trust Jesus as Lord. So, what about children? The Bible teaches that God has a special love for children.

**In Ezekiel 16:21** God expresses his anger at the killing of children and refers to them as "**my children**."

**Christ taught** that we need to become like children in order to be saved. He made a point of embracing and welcoming children to Him, even rebuking those who were preventing the kids from getting to him.

**Jesus said** that angels are assigned to children.

**Clearly God** is setting children apart in a special way and He provides special treatment for them. I believe this includes a special allowance for the salvation of young children and infants.

Psalm 8:2 says *From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise*. The inclusion of "infants" is significant because they would not be conscious of giving praise; it would have to be something instinctive.

**John the Baptist** was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb. This suggests a righteous standing was conferred on him even before his birth.

**David, in reference** to his son who had died, said the child could not come to him, but that he would go to the child. Implies that the child would be in Heaven.

## 6. What Will We Do in Heaven?

By looking at the current earth and what we are now doing, we can know some things that we will do.

**Worship and praise God.** Numerous passages reveal this.

**Work and serve.** Remember that in the Garden of Eden Adam was given responsibility to tend to the Garden. Our work in heaven will not be difficult or frustrating like work often is now. It will be fulfilling. We will have specific tasks & responsibilities that will be suited to our talents, abilities, giftedness.

**We will rest.** Many passages speak of heaven as a place and time of rest. Rest from struggles, frustrations, effects of sin.

**Travel and do business.** Rev. 21:24

*The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup>Its gates will never close by day because it will never be night there. <sup>26</sup>They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.*

**John** pictures people traveling into and out of the new Jerusalem. Speaks of nations and thus cities on the new earth and maybe throughout the universe.

Many other things. Remember what Paul wrote. 1 Cor 2:9

*But just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and {which} have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."*

**There is an interesting tension** when it comes to life and death. I've seen it. We have an instinctive desire to live. Rightfully, we see death as an enemy. It was part of the fall not part of the original creation. So, even for those of us who know Christ and are bound for heaven, we have an instinctive desire to postpone death as long as we can. The N.T. writers understood this.

**That may be** why they offer glimpses of heaven that are designed to create within us a longing for heaven. **Charles Spurgeon**, historic Baptist pastor in London England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century made the following observation.

**An old theologian** once said, *Who chides a servant for taking away the first course of a feast when the second consists of far greater delicacies? Who then can regret that this present world passes away when he sees that an eternal world of joy is coming? The first course is grace, but the second is glory, and that is as much better, as the fruit is better than the blossom.*