

Earthly Questions, Eternal Answers
Final Message in the series on Heaven
6-5-11 P.M.

Revelation 21:1,3-5

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them. They will be His people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Years ago a Godly man lay dying. His grown son who was keeping vigil at his bedside asked, “Dad, how do you feel?” His father replied, “Son, I feel like a little boy on Christmas Eve.”

I tell you upon the authority of God’s eternal Word tonight that for every Christian, Christmas is coming. We live our lives between the first Christmas and the last one, that eternal Christmas as it were, that is coming. We walk on a world that lies this moment in the power of the evil one but someday will be renewed and certainly constitute a part of that glorious eternal reward and resting place called Heaven. Jesus Christ will soon reign in visible form to every eye that has ever lived as the undisputed King and Lord of the Universe. The good news tonight is that you and I are going to reign with Him.

By faith and God’s grace we can know what awaits us there in His presence. It is something so magnificent and majestic that it takes our breath away. Job phrased it quite well when he said in Chapter 19:26-27 “And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” The prospect of seeing God eclipsed all of Job’s heartaches, and he had a number of them. Surely it can eclipse yours and mine.

That great theologian Peter Pan is quoted as saying , “To die will be an awfully big adventure.” That is true but it is going to be an awfully big adventure **only** for those who die in Christ. For those without Christ it is

going to be an awfully **big** tragedy. Of course death is not the adventure. Death is only the doorway into eternal life either in Christ's presence or in the eternal lake of fire. The big adventure is what comes after death---being in the presence of God. Just before he was hanged by the Nazis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer prayed aloud, "O God this is the end; but for me it is just the beginning." His trust in the promises of Christ served him well in the face of death.

We shouldn't glorify or romanticize earth—Jesus didn't. He wept over it in John 11:35 at the tomb of Lazarus. For every beautiful story of people peacefully slipping out into eternity, there are other stories of confused and shrunk people, wasting away mentally and physically, leaving behind exhausted, confused, and grief stricken loved ones. If you have seen death close up there are a lot of things about it that are not pleasant or pretty. But unless Christ returns in our life time it's absolute that my death and yours is a certainty. I Co. 15:25-26 clearly indicates that. Those verses state in part, "For Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Farther on in verses 54 and 55 of that same chapter Paul exclaims, "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Where, O Death, is your victory? Where O death is your sting?" Romans 8: tells us that neither death, nor life, and a whole list of other things will be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

No, death is not going to **separate** us from Christ, for those who believe in Him, it is going to **join** us to Christ. It is going to be the vehicle that actually ushers us right into His presence. Then at the final resurrection, Christ will demonstrate his omnipotence by turning death on its head, making forever alive what appeared forever buried.

It is our faith in these facts that keeps us from clinging desperately to this life and actually enables us to stretch out our arms and hands in anticipation like a little child that is waiting to be picked up by its daddy.

Oh, what a world that is going to be!! I am overwhelmed thinking about it. What a great God we will enjoy and serve forever.

Don't let a day go by without anticipating that Heavenly place that Christ is preparing for us. God not only delights in the Heaven bound, but He also delights in the Heaven minded. Hebrews 11:16 declares ' They were longing

for a better country--- a Heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

Tonight I want to ask you, what I am terming, some earthly questions that plead for eternal answers.

We will have all of eternity to celebrate the great victories that Christ gave us on earth, but we have only a brief window of opportunity now to win those victories. As missionary C.T.Studd once stated, “Only one life, twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”

What is it that will last for eternity? Not your car, house, degrees, trophies or business. What will last for eternity is every service to the needy, every dollar given to feed the hungry, every cup of cold water given to the thirsty, every investment of time and money into missions and missionaries, every prayer for the needy, every effort invested in evangelism, and every labor of love that manifests Christ unto the least, the lost, and the lonely. That and a thousand other things that reflect the love and concern of Christ for eternal things here on this earth. Galatians 6: 7-8 tells us that we will reap in eternity what we have planted in this life.”

Setting our minds on Heaven is a discipline and a delight that we need to learn. We should ask God to help us daily to be Heaven minded.

Let me share with you some thought provoking questions that might help you to tune into Heaven more and more with each passing day. Ask yourself these questions.

1. Do I daily reflect on my own mortality? (I sure do anymore)
2. Do I daily realize there are only two destinations—Heaven or Hell—and that I and every person I know will go to one or the other?
3. Do I daily remind myself that this world is not my home and that everything in it is going to burn, leaving behind only what is eternal?
4. Do I daily recognize that my choices and actions have a direct influence on the world to come?
5. Do I daily realize that my life is being examined by God, the Audience of One, and that the only appraisal of my life as to its worth and service and merit that will ultimately matter is his?
6. Do I daily reflect on the fact that my ultimate home will be in Heaven where I will see God and serve Him as a resurrected being in a resurrected

body where I will overflow with joy and delight in drawing nearer to God by studying Him and His creation?

It was the theologian Paul Helm who wrote, “The goal and end of a person’s calling does not terminate in this life, but it makes sense only in the light of the life to come.” In other words the world to come is what we are made for --- and that is what gives shape and meaning to our present lives. If we think regularly and often of the Heavenly and the eternal, we are not easily turned aside to become prey for Satan’s lies and distractions.

Knowing that this present world is coming to an end and that I will be resurrected into a new Heaven and a new Earth should daily and profoundly affect my behavior. 2 Peter 3:11-14 states “You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God...In keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then dear friends since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him.” Do you see behavior and anticipation bound up in those words? I sure do.

Christ centered and righteous living today is directly affected by knowing where we are going and that rewards await us there for faithful and fruitful service. That is exactly what the Bible means in I John 3:3 where it states “Everyone that hath this hope in himself, purifies himself, even as He is pure.”

The more my mind is on Heaven the less appealing sin is. It is when our mind drifts to the flesh and the pleasures of the flesh that sin seems attractive and we find ourselves foolishly contemplating trading the pleasures of the eternal for a few fleeting seconds of sinful pleasure. We need to tell ourselves anew that following Christ is not a call to abstain from gratification but to delay gratification. It is finding our joy in Christ rather than seeking joy in the things of this world. Heaven should be our North Star, reminding us where we are and which direction we are going.

You see when we realize the pleasures that await us in God’s presence, we can forgo lesser pleasures now. When we realize the possessions that await us in Heaven, we will gladly give away possessions on Earth to store up treasures in Heaven.

The person who is Heaven oriented is a person who lives with God and goals in mind, We identify more and more with the philosophy of the Apostle Paul when he said in Phil. 3:13 and 14 “But this one thing I do: Forgetting those things which are behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the GOAL (there is that word) to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Thinking daily of Heaven will motivate us to live each day in profound thankfulness to God: Hebrews 12:28 declares, “Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptable with reverence and awe.”

In his novel *Perelandra*, C.S.Lewis says of his friend Ransom, who has recently returned from another planet, “A man who has been in another world does not come back unchanged.” I tell you that person who gives continuing thought to another world—the Heaven where we will be with Christ forever---also does not remain unchanged. His whole life and service reflects that change. It’s like driving by the Old Home Bakery years ago in Rapid City and the beautiful aromas that came from that building were so appealing and delightful. By faith you and I can smell the banquet being prepared for us. We know what our mouth is watering for. We know what our hearts are longing for.

Have you ever had some wonderful moments with family or friends where everything was absolutely just so enjoyable and fulfilling that you have either said or thought, “It just doesn’t get any better than this?” No matter how difficult your life may have been I am sure there have been at least a few times when you have had some magnificent moments and you thought nothing could be any better than this.

I want to tell you something. That isn’t true. The most wonderful moments on this old earth will not be able to be compared with any moment that you will ever have in Heaven for that eternal world will far surpass anything that this world can offer even at its best.

This study of Heaven as given me a new anticipation of what awaits me and every believer in that beautiful city where Jesus rules and reigns. I hope it has been helpful in stirring up your heart to often and longing looking away from this old sinful and perishing world and breathe a prayer of unceasing

thanks that this world is not your home and that you are just passing through.

Remember those powerful and profound words of Revelation 21 which I read to you at the beginning. Write them on the back of your eyelids and engrave them in your hearts.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them. They will be His people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Dear friends those are the words of our coming King Jesus. You can count on them. You can stake your soul on them. Take it to the bank. Live every day in light of them. Make every choice in light of Christ’s certain promise.

We are all made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.

If you know Jesus as your Savior, you and I are going to be with Him as resurrected individuals in that glorious place. We will be there with the friends we love and cherish in Christ. Together we will embark on the ultimate adventure of living in a spectacular new universe awaiting our exploration and dominion. Jesus will be the center of all things and joy will be the air we breathe.

And just when you think it “it doesn’t get any better than this” IT WILL.