

# Heaven, The Party That Goes On Forever

Lesson 12

Becoming a generous church

February 26, 2012

We've all heard people say, "Someday, I'm going to heaven." Amazingly, many people who aren't particularly religious sincerely believe they'll go to heaven. Why? They'll tell us, "Because I'm a good person," or "Because I've tried to be a good person." Almost everyone expects to go to heaven. Researchers tell us nearly nine out of ten Americans expect to go to heaven when they die.

But God's Word tells us only those who have a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ will be welcomed into heaven. While this may be offensive news to many in our politically correct society, at the end of the day, it is God who determines who will be welcomed into heaven and who won't be.

This is the reason whenever teachers bring their students to the subject of heaven it's important to remind everyone how we can get into heaven—and how we can't. We never know whose heart God will be speaking to when we share the truth of His Word in regard to this issue.

Chances are—there may be an unsaved spouse sitting alongside his or her partner in your Connect Group, or a visitor, who won't be going to heaven. They need Jesus. Don't miss this opportunity to tell them how wonderful heaven is going to be and how they can be sure that they will be there.

**Take a moment** to ask God to use you and your fellow Connect Group teachers to point every unsaved person in your Connect Groups to a saving relationship with Jesus. Ask God to bring spiritual illumination so every unsaved person can see their sin and need for Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict the lost of their sins and give them the saving faith they need in order to come to Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit will bring revival to your born again class members so those who are saved will have a burden to see their unsaved family, friends and community saved and on their way to heaven.

## The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about heaven, but...

It tells us enough that we know heaven is the place we want to spend eternity. It also tells us enough that we know heaven is an amazing place that is filled with indescribable beauty, angels and the saints of the ages. More importantly, it is the center of God's throne where one day we will see our Savior sitting at the right hand of our heavenly Father.

As we search the Bible for information about heaven some things become absolutely clear. Other things aren't so clear. It is good to have a theology of humility in regard to the things that are not as clear as we might like them to be. It is easy to fall into the trap of rigid dogmatism. This needs to be avoided. A good standard to follow is—"Where the Bible speaks, I speak. Where the Bible is silent, I am silent."

## Who will we see in heaven?

Naturally, as mentioned before, we will see our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We will see the throne of God, we will see the angels of God and the saints of the ages plus all our loved ones who died in Christ.

Heaven will be a truly amazing place from both a visual and personal standpoint as we learn the following from the Isaiah, Ezekiel and the book of Revelation—

- Isaiah gives us some insight into how amazing heaven will be in Isaiah 6.1-5: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were Seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’”
- Happily, we’ll be in our sinless, glorified bodies when we see this sight so we won’t be crying out like Isaiah, “Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips...” But, no doubt, we’ll be just as amazed at the wonder of what we’ll be seeing as Isaiah.
- Ezekiel gives us another astonishing view of heaven in Ezekiel 1.25-28. He writes, “Then there came a voice above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell face down...”
- The apostle John gives us yet another amazing view in Revelation 1.12-18. John writes, “I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands, and among the lamp-stands was someone ‘like the Son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, ‘do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys to Hades.’”

## What we will and won't see in heaven—

### What we will do in heaven—

- John describes **the throne of God** in Revelation 22.1-2a, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month...”
- There is **no temple in the city**, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev. 21.22).
- “The city **does not need the sun or the moon** to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Rev. 21.23).
- “There will be **no more night**. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light” (Rev. 22.5).
- **There will be no sea** (Rev. 21.1).
- “**Nothing impure will ever enter it**, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21.27).
- There will be **no more tears** (Rev. 21.4).
- There will be **no more death, or mourning or crying or pain**, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21.4).
- Most people’s image of heaven is completely wrong
  - ✓ We often see cartoon like pictures of people sitting on clouds, strumming harps. There is no basis for this in the Bible.
  - ✓ Some people believe that heaven will be one long, eternal church service. While heaven is filled with people and angels glorifying God there is no basis for thinking that it is one long, eternal church service.
  - ✓ Some people think of heaven as an eternal retirement in which we’ll sit around and do nothing. There is no indication of this in the Bible. In fact, just the opposite is true.
- We read in Revelation 22.3, “his servants will serve him.” This may trouble some people but it’s only because they don’t understand that the “curse” associated with work has been removed (Gen. 3.17). We will no longer grow weary and become physically tired. We will no longer become frustrated by the work we do. We will no longer have to

wrestle with or endure people who are making our work more difficult than it should be. We'll be living in a perfect world, that functions perfectly and we'll enjoy a body and brain that functions perfectly, too. Take God's Word for it, our lives are going to be really different.

## What will make heaven unimaginably wonderful and joyful—

- We will never be tempted by Satan to sin (Rev. 20.10).
- We will never be hurt or harmed by anyone else's sin (Rev. 21.27).
- There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain (Rev. 21.4). Imagine what it will be like to never hear or worry about the death of a loved one? Imagine what it will be like to never fear that you or someone you know and love might be killed in an accident.
- Imagine what it will be like to live forever and never feel again feel the slightest pain.
- Imagine living forever and never making a single decision or doing a single thing that you will ever regret.
- Imagine living in an environment in which there is only love. No matter who you meet or how many you meet you'll never again have to deal with anger, rage, bitterness or jealousy.
- Imagine living in a world that is only filled with gentle, kind and loving people in which you'll never meet anyone who is harsh, insensitive or uncaring.
- **We need to think more about our eternal home and our lives there and less about everything that is wrong here on earth which we have no power to change.**
- It is not unusual to hear critics of Christianity quipping, "That person is so heavenly minded that he/she is no earthly good." The message comes through loud and clear: "You may live in heaven someday but right now you're living here. So keep your heart and mind focused on this world...you can worry about the next when you get there."
- **But this isn't biblical.** We read that Abraham was able to make his home in the Promised Land "like a stranger in a foreign country; as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11.10). Abraham was focused on the heavenly Jerusalem but he still lived a productive life as he sojourned on earth.

## What will make heaven fun—

- Heaven is going to be filled with fascinating people who will make it fun to be there.
  - Imagine hearing Mary tell childhood stories about Jesus.
  - The Apostle John finished the fourth gospel with these words, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them was written down, I suppose even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (Jn. 21.25). How would you like to hear all those other stories from men like Peter, James and John?
  - The Bible tells us only a small part of the stories of people like Noah, Joshua, Samuel and Elijah. How would you like to hear the rest of their stories?
  - The book of Acts ends with the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter. But the story of the early church didn’t end there. Imagine hearing details of how the church spread into India, how the gospel was taken into Spain and Egypt or, how the early Christians survived the persecutions of the Roman Empire.
  - Imagine getting a divine tour through all the mysteries of our bodies and learning every detail of how they work.
  - It’s recorded in heaven, waiting for us. We will marvel at God’s creation and be filled with wonder at His love and grace.
- Suddenly the kind of home we lived in here on earth, the kind of car we drove and the amount of income and wealth we stored won’t matter. In fact, when we’re standing in heaven much of what we thought was so important here on earth will have no value.
- When we come to heaven and see Jesus there’s a good possibility we’ll scorn some of the things we held dear here on earth because we will suddenly realize how much they cost us in lost blessings that God was waiting to give us. We might even realize the relationship Jesus was waiting to have with us in our faith walk through this life—but we let money and material things get in our way.
- No doubt, you’ve heard the story of the man who had accumulated a large quantity of gold. When it came time for him to die he argued with the angel that God had sent for him, telling the angel he could not go to heaven without his large bag of gold. When the man and the angel arrived at the gate of heaven the gatekeeper asked him what he had in the bag. The man proudly showed him, to which the gatekeeper replied, “Why would you want to bring pavement with you to heaven!”
- We may smile at such a story. But sadly, a variation of this story will be all too true for many Christians. They stored their treasures on earth—and will have little or nothing waiting for them in heaven.

# GOING GENEROUS!

a Sermon Series by Dr. Jay Dennis & Connect Group Study by Pastor Terryl Delaney

- Paul gives us a powerful statement in this regard in 1 Corinthians 3.12-15 where he speaks of Christians who will be saved, “but only as one escaping the flames.” Their earthly lives, all they accomplished and all they accumulated will add up to nothing. They lost everything but their salvation because they were building and investing in their earthly lives as those they would live here forever. But as John Ortberg wrote, “When the Games Over It All Goes Back Into The Box.”
- Randy Alcorn said, “Our stewardship of our money and possessions becomes the story of our lives.” He’s almost correct. We need to add the stewardship of what we did or didn’t do with our time, talents, and spiritual gifts, plus the opportunities God gives us become the eternal stories of our lives, too. There will be no editing or rewrites.
- The good news is that we have time. We can’t change what we’ve done or not done in the past. But we can choose what we will do beginning today and for the rest of our lives.
- We should never forget, dismiss or minimize the words of Jesus, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6.21). May we think carefully and choose wisely. If we do we will become good stewards and generous Christians.