

Heaven

Thoughts Gleaned from Issue 17 of the "Good News" Publication

Read Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 12:1b-2a and Matt. 4:17. Upon what should our hearts be set during our earthly pilgrimage?

Our Hearts Are Set On Heaven

After being raised to a new life with Christ, the goal of our existence is to ever be with Jesus in heaven. For this reason our hearts are not set on earthly things which ever disappoint us and eventually disappear. Like the baseball player who pitched the winning game in the World Series said, "If this is all there is, then life is pretty empty." Like the Israelites in the wilderness, we are aliens in this world. Our goal is the Promised Land, the paradise of God, where God dwells in the fullness of His glory. Our eyes are fixed... *"not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* (2 Cor. 4:18) Together, we are running a race. Our goal is to be with the Lord, so *"we throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and.. run with perseverance the race marked out for us... (we) fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."* (Heb. 12:1b-2a) The kingdom of heaven is already with us in part when Christ is near to us. (Nt. Matt. 4:17)

Read Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22-23; Matthew 25:31-36; 1 Cor. 15. What will happen to the bodies and souls of believers when we die?

Angels Will Take Our Spirits And Christ Will Later Take Our Bodies

As with Lazarus, at our time of death angels will gather us into the presence of the Lord and our brothers and sisters throughout the ages, to the place where Christ has gone to prepare a place for us. And our bodies will rest in the earth until, on the last day, the Lord returns with the spirits of those who have departed, then the resurrection, and invitation.

Read John 6:29, 40; John 14:6; 2 Thess. 2:10-12. What will happen on the day of judgment?

Those Who Do The Father's Will Shall Find Acceptance

The burning question for all who experience the separation from God which has come upon us through the sin of Adam and Eve, who were cast out of paradise, is: who can find acceptance with God and receive eternal life with Him in heaven. First of all, it is not the Lord's will that anyone should perish (Nt. 2 Pet. 3:9), those who perish, and are separated from Him for eternity in hell do so because of their rejection of His gift. *"They perish because they refused to love the truth and be saved... so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."* (2 Thess. 2:10b, 12). This also includes those who have some knowledge of Christ but whose lives declare them to be faithless. On the Last Day what a shock it will be for multiple millions who thought they would be saved by just being familiar with Jesus and even thinking of Him often. *"NOT EVERYONE"*, Jesus said, *"WHO SAYS TO ME, 'LORD, LORD, WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. But he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."* (John 7:21) The will of the Father is that we believe in the One he sent, and have eternal life. The Bible tells us that *"all who believe, and are baptized, shall be saved..."* (Mark 16:16) Through faith in Christ we have access to the Father, and to the Father's heavenly home. Doing this is something we cannot do by our own strength or will, ¹but the Holy Spirit works faith, and produces the fruits of faith, in us through the Gospel. (Nt. Rom. 10:17 & Eph. 2:8)

Read Matthew 17:1-4; Matthew 22:30; I Thessalonians 4:13-18. When will we all see one another again after death? Will we recognize one another? What will our relationships be like?

The Promise Of A Glorious Reunion – Matthew 17:1-4; Matthew 22:30; I Thessalonians 4:13-18

One of our greatest desires in this time of waiting for the Lord's return, and our deliverance into the fullness of the kingdom of heaven is to be with those we have loved and who through faith have gone before us to be with the Lord. While the Bible does not directly state that we will recognize our loved ones in heaven, the recognizable appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Nt. Matt. 17:1-4) gives evidence that we will. Besides being with the Lord, we look forward to being with one another, and with all our loved ones in Christ forever. No longer as husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons, or daughters, but together as children of the same

heavenly Father (Nt. Matt. 22:30).

Read Matthew 18:10; 28:20; Luke 1:19; Ephesians 4:10. What is the kingdom of God? Do we possess it, now?

The Kingdom Of Heaven Among Us Now

Jesus is, at one and the same time, both in heaven at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, and ruling all things for our good, and here with us. Although he ascended into heaven, yet he comes to us in a very special way in the Lord's Supper, and in His Word, and in Spirit. This closeness of heaven and earth which Jesus brings is seen in the work of the angels which are around us stand in the presence of God. (Matt. 18:10; Lk. 1:19)

Read Romans 8:18; Rev. 21:4; 22:3-5 and Rev. 7:9-17. How does this life compare to the heavenly life to come.

The life to come in the fullness of heaven is much better.

St. Paul notes that the things we endure in this life are not worth comparing to what will be ours in heaven, at Christ's return. The Biblical references to heaven as feasting is an imperfect tool describe what we cannot describe. Such fulness, satisfaction, celebration, and rejoicing that we cannot even imagine it. In heaven the Lord will: *"wipe away every tear from their eyes; an there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain."* (Rev. 21:4) *"There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him, they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light or a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever."* (Rev. 22:3-5) The point is that we will be with the Lord, and with resurrected bodies will see him face to face, and be overwhelmed with a never ending joy. Consider also Rev. 7:9-17.

Consider singing or reading the hymn, "I'm But A Stranger Here, Heaven Is My Home"