

Heaven: Home, Sweet Home

Texts: Romans 8:18-23; Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

For the past month we have been focusing on the end times. Three weeks ago we discussed the necessity of the ashes of the red heifer and the beginning of the ancient Jewish worship and how it ties into the end of time as we know it. Then, two weeks ago we talked about the Battle of Gog and Magog in our message, "Russia, Russia, Russia." Last week we discussed The Battle of Armageddon. It is as though we can hear and feel the hoof beats of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6) riding with their prophetic fulfillment.

As we have spoken much about Israel and her role in these last days, I would be remiss not to dedicate one of these messages to the church and our future. To be a member of the Body of Christ is an exciting place to be at this place in the history of planet Earth. Let's talk about it. Consider:

I. OUR PRESENT CONDITION

II Peter 1:13, 14: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me."

II Corinthians 4:6-5:2

II. THE PARADISE OF GOD

Luke 16:22: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom...."

The Abode of God

Hebrews 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

Psalms 48:1, 2: "Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Isaiah 14:13: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north."

Luke 23:43: "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The word *pairidaeza* is a Persian word which we translate "paradise" and it means an enclosed garden or walled park. Strong calls it "an Eden." This is alluded to in Revelation 2:7. Compare Genesis 3:22 and Revelation 22:2.

II Corinthians 12:2-4a: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise...."

Consider: Colossians 2:14,15; Ephesians 4:8-10; I Peter 4:18, 19.

III. PRESENT HEAVEN

II Corinthians 5:2-8; Matthew 17:1-3; Genesis 2:7. We are not disembodied spirits. "Plato, the Greek philosopher, believed that material things, including the human body and the Earth are evil, while the immaterial things such as the soul and Heaven are good. This view is called Platonism. The Christian church, highly influenced by Platonism through the teachings of Philo (ca. 20 BC - AD 50) and Origen (AD 185-254), among others came to embrace the "spiritual" view that human spirits are better off without bodies and that Heaven is a disembodied state." (Heaven, Randy Alcorn, p. 52). Consider the literal references that contradict that philosophy: Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9; 5:8; 8:6; 15:8; 19:14; II Kings 2:11.

We know for certain there is One physical body in Heaven at this present moment: Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:11; Acts 7:55-60.

Hebrews 8:1-5 says that the earthly tabernacle was fashioned according to the literal tabernacle in Heaven. The Bible suggests that Earth is the derivative realm, while Heaven is the source realm. We tend to start with the Earth and work our way up to Heaven, when we really should be starting with Heaven and work our way down to Earth.

IV. FUTURE HEAVEN

A. Resurrection: John 14:1, 2; I Corinthians 15:51-55; I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Why does the Bible refer to the body that we occupied on Earth as asleep? It is not because we go out of existence; it is because we will be awakened! Even now, when we sleep, we dream. When we experience something unpleasant while sleeping, it is a nightmare. When it is nice, it is a dream. Even our references to dreams as a rule are pleasant. Shakespeare has Hamlet saying, "To sleep, perchance to dream - ay, there's the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause...."

B. Restoration: Romans 8:22, 23; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5

Theologian Anthony Hoekema writes, "The New Jerusalem...does not remain in a 'heaven' far off in space, but it comes down to the renewed Earth; there the

redeemed will spend eternity in resurrection bodies. So Heaven and Earth, now separated, will then be merged: the new Earth will also be Heaven, since God will dwell there with His people. Glorified believers, in other words, will continue to be in Heaven while they are inhabiting the new Earth.”

While trying to get our mind around all this, allow me to paraphrase an illustration I borrowed from Randy Alcorn. We are living in a homeless shelter in Miami Beach. We take a jet trip heading to Beverly Hills. We have a layover in Dallas. We see friends who have flown in from all over the world. And then we continue our trip to California. We are overwhelmed with the splendor of our new home in Beverly Hills. Then we board a jet and fly back to Miami Beach, back to the same neighborhood, however it has been totally renovated. In all the world there is not a more beautiful or more pleasant place to be.

An old preacher said, “When I thought of Heaven as a boy, I thought of a place of tall, spiraled buildings; thick clouds - a place of mystery. Then my little brother died and the buildings were shorter and not as spiraled; the clouds weren’t as thick, because my little brother was there. Then as the years went by, my mother passed, then my father passed and the buildings were shorter still and hardly spiraled at all; the clouds had nearly dissipated because my little brother, mother and father were there.” Then he said, “my precious wife went to Heaven and I did not see the tall, spiraled buildings anymore, the clouds were gone and green, green grass with flowers began to appear. Now, as an older man, I have more friends on the other side than I have here on Earth. Heaven is no longer a place of mystery, Heaven is home.”

-Pastor Pope-