

A Few More Things We Need to Know About Heaven

Message 5 of 5 in the series: "Heaven"

A. God wants us to think about the realities of Heaven all the time so we can view our lives/circumstances/relationships from God's perspective.

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on **the realities of heaven**, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3 (NLT)

Note: The devil does **NOT** want us thinking about the realities of heaven at all.

"Satan, who is the god of this world, has **blinded the minds** of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News." 2 Corinthians 4:4a (NLT)

"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. **He is the spirit at work in the hearts** of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, **following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature**. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else." Ephesians 2:2-3 (NLT)

B. Heaven will NOT be boring.

"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11b (NKJV)

1. God will reward faithful stewardship on earth with exciting work and challenging responsibilities in Heaven. "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, **so now I will give you many more responsibilities**. Let's celebrate together!'" Matthew 25:21 (NLT)
2. We will experience the best art, food, music, etc. from all the cultures of the world. "Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And **all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city** (New Jerusalem)." Revelation 21:25-26 (NLT)
3. We will participate in amazing worship experiences. "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!' And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. They sang, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen.'" Revelation 7:9-12 (NLT)
4. We will feast and celebrate with God's people from all times and places. "And I tell you this, that many Gentiles **will come from all over the world**—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 8:11 (NLT)

C. After death, those who have a personal relationship with Jesus go immediately into His presence, but those who do not will be separated from Him forever.

"One of the criminals hanging beside him... said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' And Jesus replied, '**I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.**'" Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

"So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. For we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, **for then we will be at home with the Lord.**"

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NLT)

"There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip

of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’ But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’ Then the rich man said, ‘Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home. For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.’ The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’ But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t listen even if someone rises from the dead.’”
 Luke 16:19-31 (NLT)

Five observations about life after death from Jesus’ story:

1. After death, both Lazarus and the rich man were fully conscious, recognizable, aware of their surroundings, able to communicate, and in full possession of their identities.
2. After death, Lazarus was in comfort, while the rich man was in endless torment. “...at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:49-50 (NLT)
3. After death, neither Lazarus nor the rich man could change his eternal destiny. “...each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment...” Hebrews 9:27 (NLT)
4. After death, the rich man became very concerned about the spiritual welfare of his brothers. “So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’” 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NLT)
5. God **DOES NOT** want people to go to hell. “As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.” Ezekiel 33:11a (NLT)

D. We have the inspiring examples of men and women who witnessed God’s faithfulness to encourage us until we join them in Heaven.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of **witnesses to the life of faith**, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.” Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 05-21-23 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions:

1. Read Colossians 3:1-3. Share a time when you thought about Heaven recently. What happened? How did thinking about Heaven impact your mindset/attitude?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4 & Ephesians 2:2-3. Why might the devil’s motivation be to keep us from thinking about Heaven or at least keep us from thinking about it correctly?
3. Why do you think God will reward faithful stewardship on earth with exciting work and more responsibilities in Heaven? (Genesis 2:15, Matthew 25:14-21)
4. Discuss the following reasons why heaven will not be boring:
 - We will experience the best art, food, music, etc. from all the cultures of the world. (Revelation 21:25-26)
 - We will participate in amazing worship experiences. (Revelation 7:9-12)
 - We will feast and celebrate with God’s people from all times and places. (Matthew 8:11, Psalm 16:11)
5. Read Jesus’ parable about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Discuss the following observations:
 - After death, Lazarus was in comfort while the rich man was in endless torment. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Matthew 13:49-50)
 - After death, neither Lazarus nor the rich man could change his eternal destiny. (Hebrews 9:27)
 - After death, the rich man became very concerned about the spiritual welfare of his brothers. (2 Corinthians 5:20, Ezekiel 33:11)

6. Quotations to consider:

“If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest.” Corie Ten Boom

“Hearts on earth may say in the course of a joyful experience, ‘I don't want this to ever end.’ But invariably it does. The hearts of those in Heaven say, ‘I want this to go on forever.’ And it will. There is no better news than this.” J.I. Packer

“Why do we not know the country whose citizens we are? Because we have wandered so far away that we have forgotten it. But the Lord Christ, the king of the land, came down to us and drove forgetfulness from our hearts. God took to himself our flesh so that he might be our way back.” Augustine