

On Heaven and the Glorification of the Saints

Attempts to consider and discuss heaven soon find that it is inseparable from the subject of the saint's glorification. Heaven is heaven because it is the domicile of the glorified and it is heaven for us because the redeemed have been glorified and thus are able to enjoy it. None but glorified saints could ever take delight in Heaven. It would not be heaven at all to the unregenerate.

The word Heaven is used in a variety of ways.

1. The regions of the sky where the birds fly. **Matt. 8:20; 24:30.**
2. The regions of space where the stars inhabit. **Act. 7:42; Heb. 11:12.**
3. The dwelling place of the risen Lord Christ, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the home of innumerable angels in festal gathering and the spirits of just men made perfect.¹ **Heb. 9:24; 12:22,23.**

This usage includes the "New Heavens," and "New Earth" which involve the tremendous change in the created order that will be brought about in the final conflagration, where our portion of the universe will be cleansed from every stain resulting from the fall and the last vestiges of sin will be removed. **2Pet. 3:7, 13; Rev. 21:1ff.**

In this connection, there is also the phrase usually rendered, "heavenly places" or similarly. This emphasizes the spiritual *realm* or *state* the believer is introduced into by regeneration.

Moreover, there is that class of expressions "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Heaven" which is generally understood as the reign of God eventually ushering in the "New Heavens" and the "New Earth". **Matt. 13:31; Mk. 4:26.**

In what ways literally and figuratively is the blessedness of the righteous described?

1. **Literal terms:** include "life" and "everlasting" or "eternal life". **Matt. 7:14; 19:16, 29; 25:46.** It is called "glory," an "eternal weight of glory" and "the glory of God." **Ro. 2:7, 10; 5:2; 2Cor. 4:17.** All these terms seem to denote the blessed quality of life enjoyed by the righteous.
2. **Figurative terms:** include "Paradise" **Lk. 23:43; 2Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7** "Heavenly Jerusalem" **Gal. 4:26; Rev. 3:12** "Kingdom of Heaven" "Kingdom of God" "eternal kingdom" "kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world" **Matt. 25:34; 2Tim. 4:18; 2Pet. 1:11** "Eternal Inheritance" **1Pet. 1:4; Heb. 9:15** Believers are said to, "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" "to be in Abraham's bosom" **Lk. 16:22; Matt. 8:11** "to reign with Christ" **1Tim. 2:11, 12** and "to enjoy a Sabbath or Rest" **Heb. 4:10, 11.**

Does the Scriptures Provide any light on the nature of heaven?

¹ Though it is not the scope of this handout, it is fitting here to add that it is important to bear in mind that there is a distinction between the spirits of just men made perfect and the full and final glorification of the saints. The former refers to that disembodied state that the believer enters upon death prior to the return of Christ. The later refers to the final state in which soul and body is reunited in the glorified state occurring once and for all time at the return of Jesus Christ. Though Scripture tells us of no other dwelling place for the righteous in the 'other world' save in the presence of Christ, it does tell of two conditions in which the righteous dwell in that 'other world.'

1. It must be agreed to by all that the glories pertaining to heaven so far exceed all that is obtainable by the light of this life that the Scriptures largely speak of it by what it is not. It is presented as a place devoid of suffering, death, famine, plague, and sickness (in short devoid of every effect of the Fall). **Rev. 7:15-17.**
2. The presentation, which Scripture gives, presents heaven as a definite place, in addition to a place of blessedness. It is defined by the localized presence of Christ's finite soul and body, and it is the scene of the manifestation of the glory of God. **Jn. 14:2,3; 17:24; Rev. 22:3-5.**
3. As for the final location for the city of God, it is not improbable that after the general destruction of the present form of the world by fire, this creation will be reconstituted in a permanent physical/spiritual state and become a fit dwelling for the Christ and His Church. **Isa. 65:17-25; Ro. 8:19-23; 2Pet. 3:5-13; Rev. 21:1-4.**

What is it that makes heaven heaven for the redeemed?

1. Put negatively, heaven is the deliverance from every form of evil. It is not only deliverance from its guilt and reigning power, but from the very presence. **Rev. 7:16, 17; 21:27; 22:14, 15.**
2. Put positively,
 - a. It will be the absolutely perfection of our natures. As a result of the Fall all types of internal tensions became part of the human condition. In glory all our powers will again function as they were meant to function. We will be able to harmoniously exercise our powers intellectually, emotionally and morally. These capacities must also eternally increase, because we will forever be growing in the knowledge of God. **1Cor. 13:9-12.**
 - b. We shall enjoy the fellowship and communion of the society of heaven forever. We shall have ongoing and eternal fellowship with angels, and other saints. **Jn. 17:24; 1Jn. 1:3.**
 - c. Glorified Saints will partake of the beatific vision, which will give an ever-increasing knowledge of the glory and excellencies of God. This will fuel our transformation forging and confirming us into the image of Christ. **He. 12: 23; 1Jn. 3:1-3; Rev. 22:4, 5.**
 - d. The redeemed shall reign with Christ in glory. **2Tim. 2:13; Ja. 1:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 22:5b.**

What effect will heaven have on the memory of the Redeemed?

1. Believers will have knowledge of fellow saints acquainted with in this life. It will be of a quality and quantity commensurate with the new mode of existence. **2Sam. 12:23²; 1Thess. 2:19; 4:13, 14.**
2. Believers will have memory of past sins delivered from. One of the chief delights and tokens of the love of God will consist in just this fact. **Rev. 19:1-3.**

What joy awaits the faithful pilgrim. What consolation is ours, because of what God has done in Christ. Truly, ***"No eye has seen, no ear heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love him- but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."*** **1Cor. 2:9, 10.**

HEAVEN

There is a land where shadows never deepen,
 And sunset glories fade not into night,
 Where weary hearts shall win the boon of endless blessing,
 And faith is not lost in sight.

A land where sad farewells are never spoken,
 Where every loss of life is richest gain,

² Obviously an increased quality and quantity would be needed if David would have the ability to recognize an infant barely seen in this life and that several years in the future.

Where stumbling feet at last shall find a haven,
And hearts have no more pain.

A land where those who sigh for long-lost faces,
The loved of life whose going brought us pain,
Shall find them in brightness of the Father's glory,
Where we shall meet again.

Oh that bright strand the blood-washed ones of Jesus
Are safe; no more the weary feet shall roam;
They find at last all that the heart has longed for,
Within God's house at home.

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