

What We Need To Know About Heaven

Introduction

- A. I stumbled across a blog last week where the writer had asked his followers to comment on what they believed would happen when they died.
1. The responses were interesting.
 - a. "When ya gone ya gone, make the most of your life on earth."
 - b. "I don't believe in either (heaven or hell) actually, I can't force myself to...its just entirely illogical."
 - c. "We're all in the matrix and the afterlife is when we die our brains get uploaded into another simulation. That's what I hope for."
 - d. "I'm honestly not sure, I guess I want to believe in something, sometimes I look up at the sky and think that the people I've lost are looking down or whatever...I turn to heaven when things go bad."
 2. I found the responses kind of sad.
 - a. I guess maybe it's "trendy" to be irreverent about such a serious topic when you're 30 and believe you will live forever. It's not so "trendy" when you're old and dying. It's terrifying!
 - b. But I'm just as disturbed by the doubt in these responses. What it is that makes heaven illogical for this one guy? Why is this other guy so unsure? It's a sad place to find ourselves on such an important issue.
- B. For the disciple, this is what it all boils down to...what happens when we die.
1. Please understand that I know we serve Jesus because life here on earth is better when we live it His way.
 2. But lets be honest; we're not serving Jesus because it helps us have a better marriage. We're serving Jesus because we are going to die.
 - a. We know this.
 - b. We believe there are only two destinies beyond this life – heaven or hell.
 - c. We believe that hell is a terrible place and we do not want to go there.
 - d. We believe heaven is a wonderful place and long to be there with God.
 3. For a disciple, these big picture truths impact daily life in a profound way.
 - a. Paul told us to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2).
 - b. Paul would tell the Philippians that the pursuit of heaven was the ONE THING he did (Philippians 3:12-14).
 - c. Jesus told us to spend our days laying up heavenly treasure (Matthew 6:19-21).

- d. We are careful to avoid sin and do the will of God in all things because we want to go to heaven (Matthew 7:21).
- C. But if we are truly to do what these passages urge us to do, we've got to know something about heaven.
 1. This idea of looking to the sky when times are bad and hoping there might be something better after this life simply WILL NOT CUT IT!
 2. If heaven is to be THE GOAL that determines everything else that happens in life, then there are some basic things about heaven that I MUST HAVE squared away. If this whole thing is to work for us as God intended, there can't be any doubt about these.
 3. I want to mention three things that we need to know about heaven.

We need to know that Heaven is real.

- A. This point may hardly seem necessary to make to a crowd like this.
 1. You got out of bed early on a Sunday morning, dressed in your best to worship the God that we believe will bring us home to heaven one day. Do we really need to be reminded that heaven is real? Perhaps not.
 2. But I would remind you that we live in a culture of unbelief.
 - a. Remember those comments on the blog.
 - b. The famous British scientist, Stephen Hawking said this, "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."
 3. Satan wants to plant seeds of doubt in the hearts of disciples about heaven.
 - a. Remember, it's the goal that drives everything else we do.
 - b. If he can create doubt about heaven, then he begins to undermine our determination to live for Jesus every day.
 - c. Do we really need to be reminded that heaven is real? Perhaps we do.
- B. So, can I just offer all of us a little reassurance to all of us?
 1. If Satan has ever tried to plant a seed of doubt in your heart about heaven, let's get rid of it.
 2. Because we can establish with overwhelming evidence that God exists and this book is His word for us, we know that Jesus is coming one day to take His disciples home to heaven.
 3. On this point the scriptures speak frequently and clearly.

- a. **John 14:1-3.** Jesus is coming back for His disciples so that He can bring them home to be with Him.
 - b. **I Peter 1:3-5.** We have an inheritance reserved in heaven.
 - c. **Matthew 25:31-34.** At the judgment, the righteous will be invited to come and inherit the kingdom.
 - d. **Matthew 5:11-12.** Those who suffer for the cause are promised that their reward in heaven is great.
4. Remember that these are the words of God about our future. Because it's what God says on the matter, we know it's true (**Hebrews 10:23**).
 5. Heaven is a reality; don't doubt it for a moment!

We need to know that Heaven is awesome.

- A. A friend of mine shared a story with me about a man who had left the Lord.
 1. He was reaching out to the wayward brother and trying to persuade him to come back to the Lord. However, the guy would not budge.
 2. Finally, in frustration he asked the guy, "don't you want to go to heaven?" The man replied, "Not really. I was never all that excited about sitting on clouds and playing harps."
 3. This guy's image of heaven was based on cartoon fantasy, not Bible fact.
- B. I don't suspect that any of you see heaven as he did.
 1. But I do fear that sometimes our concepts of heaven are too vague. We know that it's better than hell; we know it's a good place. But we don't know much more than that.
 2. In fact, this nebulous view we have of heaven may make it difficult for it to compete with the very real, very cool stuff we have right here on earth. Heaven is a great thought when I think about dying, but for now I want to keep playing with my iPad and planning my next cruise (and hope the Lord does not come before we get to see Alaska).
 3. Our ignorance and our prosperity work in concert to rob us of our longing for heaven.
- C. Sometimes we need to reflect on how awesome heaven is. The Bible tells me some things about heaven that makes me really long for it.
 1. **Revelation 14:12-13.** Disciples spend their time on earth fighting. We battle for lost souls. We fight Satan's efforts to corrupt our culture. We struggle against our own weaknesses. Heaven provides rest from our labors.

2. **Revelation 21:3-4.** We do not know life without sorrow. Just listen to the way we talk (“You have to take the good with the bad.” “Life has ups and downs.”). In fact, sometimes when everything is good, I worry...because I know there’s only one way to go when you’re on top – DOWN! Life will take us through all kinds of disappointments, sorrows and griefs. But Heaven will be a place where there are no more tears.
3. **Revelation 21:3-4.** We do not know life without pain. We suffer from the ravages of disease and injury in our own bodies. Even if we live a very health life and take good care of our bodies, they will still be subject to the ravages of time. Heaven offers relief from the pains of this life.
4. **Revelation 21:3-4.** We do not know life without death...and I hate it! I hate saying goodbye to people I love. I hate that terrible void that is left by their absence. I hate gaps that are left behind when faithful kingdom workers are no longer with us to do their thing. I’m looking forward to being in a place where there are no more funerals, no more long processions to the grave side, no more cold granite markers...because there is no more death. Would you trade your iPad for that?

- D. I’ve heard Olympic athletes describe how they were driven in the training by a clear image of being able to stand at the top of that podium and receive their gold medal as their national anthem was played.
1. They had a clear picture of the goal.
 2. If we are going to make heaven our all-consuming passion, we need to remember how awesome it is! This has to be in front of us every day!

We need to know that Heaven is accessible.

- A. The fact that heaven is real and an awesome place will be of little value to the person who does not believe he can really go there. There are two extremes on this issue of who will go to heaven.
1. Most people in our culture believe that almost everyone is going to heaven.
 - a. Surveys tell us that nine out of ten Americans believe in some concept of heaven; and almost that many believe they are going there.
 - b. It seems that, in the minds of most people, only the exceptionally evil will be excluded, though it is increasingly difficult to identify who they are.
 - c. We need to be honest about this.
 - 1) The Bible does not teach that most people are going to heaven. It teaches the opposite (**Matthew 7:13-14**).

- 2) It does not teach that all good, religious people will go to heaven. Only those that do the will of God will enter (**Matthew 7:21-23**).
 - 3) This isn't what our world teaches us, but it is what God says and He's the only one who matters.
2. But there is another extreme to which people go...an extreme sometimes present among us.
 - a. Some view heaven as a place only for the spiritually elite. It's reserved for those disciples who are strong and knowledgeable. They live exemplary lives; they always do the right thing. They are so involved and dedicated.
 - b. Then we look at ourselves and say, "That's just not me." I don't know as much as I should. I try to be the person God wants me to be, but I fail. I realize that I need to grow more; I need to be stronger than I am.
 - c. Can heaven really be for a person who struggles as much as I do?
 3. It really doesn't matter how real or awesome heaven is if, at the end of the day, I don't really think I can go there.
- B. So let me say two things about all of this.
1. First, that person who appears so godly and dedicated...they struggle too! Don't' forget that.
 2. Second, heaven is absolutely for people who struggle.
 - a. Let me ask this, did the apostle Paul make some mistakes in his life (**I Timothy 1:15**)?
 - b. Did the apostle Peter have a few blunders along the way?
 3. Going to heaven does not require that we perfectly execute the instructions of Jesus all the days of our life. No one does that. In fact, provisions have been made for us because we do mess up (**I John 1:8-10**).
 4. But this passage does say that I need to be honest about my sin. I need to acknowledge it and see the forgiveness Jesus offers. When I do, He promises to cleanse me...and one day...to bring me home to be with Him.
 5. Heaven is accessible – not to the perfect – but to all with a humble heart who are willing to seek the salvation Jesus provides.

Conclusion: Is this you?

Maybe you've been missing out on the peace that hope provides because you have turned from the Lord and pursued a path of sin. Will you come home? Perhaps you've never sought the forgiveness Jesus offers. Will you turn to Him now so heaven can be your hope too?

- David A. Banning