



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, August 15, 2010

Questions for God — What is Heaven Like

(Week 3 of 5)

Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come ... Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall be forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (New Revised Standard Version)

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (New Revised Standard Version)

Questions for God: Here are some of the questions.

1. Will we see and recognize our loved ones when we get to heaven?
2. What happens immediately after you die? Does your soul go directly to heaven? Do your departed loved ones greet you?
3. What is it like in heaven?
4. Will we see our pets in heaven?
5. What will our bodies look like in heaven?

Isaiah 2:1-5 (compiled from the Interpreter's Concise Commentary)

In this passage, Jerusalem represents the coming of the final Kingdom of God for all creation. The passage represents a beautiful picture of the way God intended God's creation to be. We live in the "between" time. The Kingdom of Heaven is eternal and perfect. The kingdoms of the earth are broken, temporal, and full of the self concern of humanity (sin).

The place of Jerusalem in the Old Testament tradition is here richly illustrated. It is the city in which the royal shrine for Yahweh was built by Solomon, and where the ancient religious symbol, the ark, was to be found, it called for devotion, as many of the psalms reveal. But above all it was the place which God chose. Therefore it must become the very center of the world's life – supernaturally the highest of the mountains, to which the nations will come. It would be the source of the divine law and of the divine blessing of peace for the whole world.

Here Isaiah describes in beautiful symbolic language a picture of the current reality of heaven and the final day when God's Kingdom of Heaven and the broken creation become one.

Isaiah 11:6-9 (from the Interpreter's Concise Commentary)

Now Isaiah turns his attention to the order or the Kingdom of Heaven. There will peace that extends even to the animal world. In the ideal age to which the oracle points there will be no enmity between the animals. Peace and the true religion, here expressed as knowledge of the Lord, will be found in the holy mountain of Jerusalem – and hence in the whole land, and indeed all of heaven and earth we be united in this peace. In verse 6 a good suggested rendering is "calf and lion shall feed together" and in verse 7 "cow and bear shall be in amity." In heaven, peace rules the nature of all that is.

Today's Sermon: What is Heaven Like?

Genesis 1-3 – Eden – paradise

From the beginning of the Bible we get a picture of heaven. Eden was perfect. There was no pain, toil, worry, or self interest. Everything fit and existed in the image of God. Eden was lost when human beings (God's crown of all creation) turned their back on God. The rest of the Bible is about the restoration of Eden – of paradise. But this does not mean that God's presence in the world had ended. Nor does it mean that the perfection and paradise of Eden was destroyed. The rest of the Bible describes God's intent to bring creation back to the perfection intended in Eden. Further, the Bible affirms the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven that still exist and will one day be in unity with the creation that we have broken with our sin.

The whole of the Bible is about the human condition, and God's continuing efforts to save us. If we look at the whole biblical story, we realize that we live in the "between" time. The good news proclaimed throughout is that what was in the beginning will be in the final acts of God for God's creation.

Revelation 21:9-24 – The restoration of God's Kingdom on Earth

The final chapter in the Revelation of John takes us back to Genesis. The description includes the perfection of Eden. A river runs through this new heaven and earth much like the river of Eden. The tree of life is restored. John uses extreme poetic descriptions to describe heaven. Yet, one can only imagine the how wonderful heaven is. The limits of human language make it impossible to truly describe the full experience of living for eternity in God's perfect presence.

What is heaven like?

- Biblical language uses the metaphorical language, "it will be like this", to remind us that heaven is far beyond our imagination
- Heaven is greater than the sum of all the words in the Bible
- Paul says this: "The eye has not seen or ear heard..." In other words the Bible is hesitant to describe heaven because NO DESCRIPTION IS ADEQUATE.
- The Bible wants us to realize "the presence of God for eternity" is the greatest desire a human can have. There is nothing like it.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

The following prayers are for inspiration as you pray this week. **Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!**

I Can Only Imagine

Song by Mercy Me on album Almost There

***I can only imagine
What it will be like
When I walk
By Your side***

***I can only imagine
What my eyes will see
When Your face
Is before me***

I can only imagine.

***Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You Jesus or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in Your presence or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine. I can only imagine.***

***I can only imagine
When that day comes
And I find myself
Standing in the Son***

***I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever,
Forever worship You***

I can only imagine. I can only imagine.

***Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You Jesus or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in Your presence or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine. I can only imagine.***

***I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever,
Forever worship You***

I can only imagine. I can only imagine.

Psalm 23

New King James Version

***The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.***

***Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.***

***You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.***

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.***

Daily Readings

These readings deal with the nature and existence of heaven. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, August 16 – Read John 14:1-7. This passage is one of the greatest promises in the Bible. Jesus says, “I go to prepare a place for you... and will take you to myself.” He compares “this place” to a mansion with many rooms. Imagine the most refined mansion you can imagine. Now multiply it by at least 1000. As you come to the end of your day, give thanks for all your blessings and remember what God wants for your life. With this in mind, what would you have done different this day?

Tuesday, August 17 – Read I Corinthians 15. In this passage the apostle Paul speaks of the fact, the necessity, the assurance, the logic, and the nature of the resurrection. Toward the end of the chapter, he describes eternal life by describing the body we will receive in the next life. Paul is encouraging those followers who are suffering and sacrificing for Jesus. In other words, Paul is saying to them, “Hold fast, there is a reward greater than you can imagine.” Are you looking forward to the new body God has in store for you? Do you live each day in anticipation of that reality? Are you willing to sacrifice and suffer knowing that nothing in this life compare to the glory of God’s presence and eternity?

Wednesday, August 18 – Read Matthew 13. In this chapter Matthew writes about the parables of Jesus concerning “Kingdom of Heaven.” In each case, they begin with the words, “the Kingdom of Heaven is like.” There is no adequate description for heaven. But we can get a picture of what God requires. As you read these parables, where do you see yourself? Do you need to change? Are you willing to see God differently?

Thursday, August 19 – Read Revelation 21-22. Here John gives us the most detailed description of heaven. Most of the poetic and artistic renderings of heaven are based on these passages. Most scholars believe that John is using metaphoric language to describe heaven since he describes materials that have earthly value. Heaven is far greater than any description, poem or painting. The invitation to heaven comes in Revelation 22:16-17. Are you willing to accept God’s invitation to heaven? Is there something in this world that is more valuable to you?

Friday, August 20 – Read Matthew 19:13-15. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.” How are you like a child? Do you feel weak? Do you feel pushed aside? Do you feel small? Jesus says in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” In Matthew 5:11, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” In what ways is your faith like a child? Are you poor in spirit? Have you been persecuted?
