

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

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DOES HEAVEN HOLD ALL TO YOU?

(By Wayne S. Walker)

Through the ages mankind has always asked, “Is this world all there is?” There is something within us that yearns for a better place, yet there is nothing in our purely human experience that tells us what or where it is. However, the Bible, which claims to be a message from God to man, reveals more information and tells us about a place that is beyond the pale of this physical existence. Even the patriarchs of the Old Testament knew something about it.

“For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11:13-15). Notice that they desired a better, that is, a heavenly country. The scriptures refer to this place which God prepared for them, and the Bible also teaches for us as well, as heaven. We want to examine what God's word has to say about this place and ask the question, does heaven hold all to you?

I. What?

What is heaven? Our English word “heaven” literally means that which has been “heaved” and therefore is up. The Greek word translated “heaven” also comes from a root that means to lift or to heave. The term is often used in contrast to the earth (Gen. 1:1, Matt. 6:19-20). For our purposes, we shall define heaven as the eternal dwelling place of God and His angels, where virtuous souls receive eternal reward after death, or the celestial paradise where God lives (1 Ki. 8:22-30, Matt. 6:9).

II. Who?

Who made heaven? We might assume that God made heaven, but we might also reason that if God is eternal as the Bible says that He is, then there must also be an eternal place for such a being to dwell. But we do know that God is the one who has prepared this eternal kingdom for His people (Matt. 25:31-34). However, this raises the question, who will go to heaven? Not everyone will go to heaven (Matt. 25:41). The Bible teaches that the righteous, that is, those whose lives are right with God, will receive eternal life in heaven (Matt. 25:46).

III. When?

When did heaven come into existence? Again, it may be eternal, but if God created it, we have no idea when He did it. However, we do remember what Jesus said, that the home for the righteous in God's kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world, as part of His plan for the redemption of mankind (2 Tim. 1:8-9, Tit. 1:1-2). When shall we go to heaven? The Bible teaches that it will be after the second coming of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, the destruction of the physical universe, and the final judgment (1 Thess. 4:16-17, 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

IV. Where?

The Bible speaks of three heavens, but the first two are physical in nature. There is the atmosphere where the clouds gather and the birds fly (Ps. 147:7-8, Jer. 4:25). Also there is outer space where the sun, moon and stars are (Gen. 1:14-19). These are the heavens that Peter says will pass away with a great noise. However, there is a third heaven (1 Cor. 12:1-2). It is a spiritual place, so it will not be located in this physical universe, but wherever it is, God and Christ will be there.

V. Why?

Why is Christ preparing us a place in heaven? The answer is very plain. It is because He wants us to be with Him eternally (Jn. 14:1-3). But why should we want to go to heaven? There are several reasons, one of which is because God and Christ will be there; but there are other reasons too. It will be a place of reward (Matt. 5:12). The redeemed of all ages will be there (Matt. 8:10-11). It will be a place of joy (Matt. 25:21). And our inheritance is there (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Who would not want to go to such a place as this?

VI. How?

The final question is, how do we go to heaven? We must understand that we cannot earn a home in heaven. The only way that we can be saved in heaven is by God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9). However, this doesn't mean that there's nothing for us to do. To go to heaven, Jesus said that we must do God's will (Matt. 7:21). This means obeying the will of Christ to be saved from sin (Heb. 5:8-9). Furthermore, once we have

been saved, it means being faithful (Rev. 2:10).

Conclusion

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:3-5). Heaven is not just wishful thinking about pie in the sky by and by. It is a promise made by our Creator who has always kept His promises. Does heaven hold all to you? If so, then nothing will keep you from obeying the gospel to be saved and living faithfully so that you might meet God's conditions to receive this eternal home.

“When Will These Things Be?”

In Mark 13:1-30, many prophecies were made by Jesus that folks today claim have yet to be fulfilled. Such things as the “abomination of desolation” (Mk. 13:14), the false Christs and prophets (Mk. 13:21-22), and many other things are spoken of throughout this chapter. Was Jesus speaking of events yet to occur 2000+ years in the future, or have these things been fulfilled?

In Mark 13:2, Jesus said, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.” Upon hearing this, Peter, Andrew, James, and John asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” Jesus detailed what would happen in their future but concluded all this in verse 30. He told them, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” The words of these prophecies have been fulfilled. History reveals that they were fulfilled at the destruction

Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Jesus continues from there (Mk. 12:31-37). Now that He’s spoken of what was to come in their days, He proceeds to talk about the end of the world. He begins by saying, “Heaven and earth pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Mk. 13:31). Previously, Christ had spoken of many signs that should alert them to the destruction of Jerusalem. Now He says, “But of that day and hour, no one knows....” He’s speaking of when Heaven and Earth shall pass away or when the destruction of the world will come. In this, He warns the disciples to be alert (v. 37).

This is a warning we should heed as well. The destruction of the world has not yet come. We still await it. Unlike with the destruction of Jerusalem, there will be no signs. Are you ready for that day?

By Ethan Jennings

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

