

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Heaven—Questions Answered

Selected Passages

Keywords: Heaven, New heavens, new earth, eternity, good works, Day of Christ, judgment.

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

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I. Introduction.

- A. I thought this would be the last of the series.
- B. We saw last message that heaven is a place where we shall face judgment.
 - 1. This generated a lot of questions, some of which simply cannot be answered because the bible does not speak to certain issues.
 - 2. However, what is clear from 2 Corinthians 5 is that we must all appear before Christ's judgment to be recompensed for both the good and bad that we do now.
- C. Today I want to try to clear up some of the questions that have been raised by the sermon and hopefully make clear what was confusing.

II. Questions related to Christians being judged in heaven.

- A. What does it really matter, all that matters is that I get into heaven right?
 - 1. There is a lot of assumption here, one that you are in Christ.
 - a. As 2 Peter 1 says after a long list of what we are to be growing and pursuing, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:8-11)

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- b. In other words, Peter would not understand this mind set, he would warn you that the Lord said the road was narrow and hard and few on it.
- 2. This also ignores that in some way we will suffer loss according to 1 Corinthians 3.
 - a. To assume you won't care is a big assumption.
 - b. It is not one that I want to take. Paul assumes that the knowledge of suffering loss and being paid for what you do, both good or bad in this life, would motivate you.
 - c. So the question becomes for me, why does it not motivate you?
- 3. Finally, it makes the purpose of Christ' death to be merely a means for you to enter heaven.
 - a. Rather than to raise up worshipers here and now (John 4).
 - b. To have a people zealous for good deeds (Titus 2).
 - c. To have unbelievers glorify your Father in heaven as they see you perform good works (Matthew 5).
 - d. That your salvation was specifically for you to then perform God's ordained good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- B. What are good works vs bad?
 - 1. This is a key question because our judgment is based off of what we do.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad".
 - b. So it is only proper to ask, what are the things that are good vs bad?
 - 2. When thinking of good vs bad try to keep it simple and you will do well. I am going to give you several passages with little comment.
 - a. Remember that our good flow out of our justification by faith.
 - (1) Romans 12:1--I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

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- (2) Ephesians 2:8-10.
 - (3) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)
 - (4) So our good works are not flowing merely out of our own efforts nor are they something we have to figure out. They are part of the newness we are in Christ.
- b. Think basic and simple.
- (1) James 1:26-27. These three cover a multitude of things don't they?
 - (2) He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)
 - (3) Thus has the LORD of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice, and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger (foreigner) or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.' (Zechariah 7:9-10 NAS)
- c. Think the various lists the New Testament gives us.
- (1) 1 Corinthians 6:1-10.
 - (2) Galatians 5:19ff.
 - (3) Galatians 6:7-10.
 - (4) Ephesians 5:1-10.
- d. Understand it is often easier than you think.
- (1) God is not asking each of us to do massive works that are so intimidating. Rather, they are usually simple and speak of humility and kindness.
 - (2) God says it is precious to him when a wife shows her husband an uncontentious and gentle spirit. It is delightful for him to see a husband live with an understanding heart toward his wife.

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- (3) To care for someone who has a need when you have the ability to do so is simply going to be always right and good. Think the parable of the good Samaritan.
 - (4) A generous spirit that gives is never rejected by his Father.
 - e. If you will think on these things, nothing here is unbelievable or truly difficult.
 - f. But they do require a hope for a new heaven and earth, a place and time when sin is done away with. That this is not all that there is for us.
 - g. It also requires a mind set upon the gospel.
 - (1) The one where an eternal good was done to a wicked sinner.
 - (2) The one where the sinless One took on our sin to suffer and die on our behalf.
 - (3) The one where the infinite generosity to those horridly poor, but who did not know it, poured it out in grandiose style.
 - (4) Where we are forgiven and now called to forgive.
 - (5) Where we are shown good and now told to go do good.
 - (6) Where we are given an infinite gift and now are told to go and give.
 - (7) Where we are shown patience and now are told to be patient and forbearing to others.
 - (8) and the list could go on and on.
- C. How this can be true when Romans 8:1 says there is now no condemnation?
- 1. **κατακριμα** is the term and is only used three times in the bible.
 - a. Though the weaker form **kri,ma** is used a few other times as well.
 - b. Example of that term is Mark 12:40, where those who seek to look religious, but actually abuse their position to exploit the weak shall have a greater condemnation.

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2. Remember that this term is ‘eschatological’ and refers to judgment unto hell. It is the outworking of judicial wrath. In fact the definition of the term is this: “a legal technical term for the result of judging, including both the sentence and its execution condemnation, sentence of doom, punishment.”
 - a. Romans 5:16, 18.
 - (1) Verses 15-18 are a series of contrasts. The first contrast is seen in verse 15—it is a contrast of the deeds of Adam and Christ.
 - (a) Adam has brought sin and death into this world.
 - (b) Christ has brought forgiveness, justification, and eternal life.
 - (c) Through Adam, sin was imputed upon all of mankind.
 - (d) Through Christ, righteousness is imputed on all who believe.
 - (e) The contrasts are not merely points of interest. They are not here to create theological interest.
 - (f) Paul is writing these words to show the infinitely abundant saving power that is found in God’s grace. He is showing that the great enemies of sin and death are utterly defeated in Christ.
 - (2) The second contrast is seen in verse 16—here it is a contrast in the results that followed their deeds.
 - (a) Here we see how though the sin of Adam results in condemnation, Christ’s work results in justification.
 - (b) In a sense, Paul is saying that there are two “gifts” that were given. But the second gift is not anything like the first one.
 - (c) The first “gift” (if you can even call it a gift) judgment and condemnation. In Romans 6:23 it is called more properly, ‘wages.’

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- (d) But the gift of Christ results in justification; and this justification results in no judgment and condemnation.
- (3) The third contrast is in verse 17—here it is the power of both acts.
 - (a) The power of Adam’s sin brought death. It was not merely a death for Adam, but it was death for all of humanity. He was our representative and in him we all sinned, therefore we all shall die.
 - i) This power is seen in the phrase, “death reigned.”
 - ii) The picture for us is a throne at which all of us must come and bow. The king upon that throne is death and we are all its subjects.
 - (b) But the power of Christ’s work is such that it brings life.
 - i) Now we need to stop and look at this carefully so I want your bibles open and your minds clear.
 - ii) Look first at the verb tenses in this passage.
 - a) What tense is death’s reign? [past]
 - b) What tense is life’s reign? [future]
 - c) What we have is the justification of God right now. Those who are in Christ are justified, that is what verse 16 says.
 - d) But the fulness of life that is ours is yet to come.
 - e) Now this does not mean that we do not have it now, but that we do not fully enjoy it yet.

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- (4) So here, condemnation is a final judgment where the judicial wrath of God is meted out upon all who rebelled and rejected Him. All who sought other things to be their ultimate joy.
- b. Romans 8:1
 - (1) First just notice that word “therefore.”
 - (a) Points us back to 7:5-6.
 - (b) Now all of those vss are connected back to what he said in Romans 5:12-21.
 - (2) “Now.”
 - (a) Paul is saying that the work of Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension has inaugurated a new age.
 - (b) Something very different has happened in Christ with regard to God’s plan of salvation in the history of mankind.
 - (c) What is the new age? It is the age of where sin and the dominion of sin has been broken and is being done away with.
 - (3) Because of Jesus’ work and our union through faith to Him, we are transported out of the kingdom of sin and darkness and into the kingdom of life and light.
 - (a) We do not live and breath under the threat of condemnation.
 - (b) But.....It is not the same as conviction, which is a good and necessary work that both man and the Spirit will bring upon someone at various points.
 - (c) To not have condemnation does not mean that we shall not have shame even when we stand before the Lord.
 - (d) We shall be judged, but we shall not be condemned.

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3. To consider being judged for your good and bad things as condemnation is as wrong as being rebuked by your mother as the equivalent of being cast out of the home and family.
4. Those who receive the condemnation of the Lord shall not suffer loss of a reward in some way. They shall suffer the loss of any grace, any joy, any peace. They shall know only the pure, unmixed wrath of God for eternity.

D. But I thought I was forgiven?

1. This one is fairly easy to answer. Does not mean an absence of consequences.
2. We see this in so many ways in life.
3. Hebrews 12 speaks of the discipline of God upon His children. These are forgiven people who still are disciplined.
4. To think your forgiveness means that there are no consequences when you stand before God at that judgment is to ignore the several passages we have seen already.
5. The forgiveness we receive means we shall never pay the penalty of our sin—death. But it does not mean that whatever we do is simply covered by Christ’s death and nothing will ever come of it.
6. Attached to this is the question of what about those sins we do but have confessed and repented of?
 - a. I don’t have a simple answer for this. But I do know that confession and repentance are good works that will receive praise from your Lord.
 - b. I also know that the Lord knows you are frail and prone to wander. He knows your heart and intentions more than you do. And that is enough for me.

III. Conclusion.

- A. 2 Peter 3:10-18 is a good ending for it bridges both the coming New Heavens and Earth and a call to walk soberly and circumspectly.

Closing Song

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Small Group Questions

- **What part of this sermon was most helpful to questions in your mind regarding heaven and judgment?**
- **How does this sermon help change your thinking about what heaven is for and what to expect?**
- **What part of your expectation about heaven is undergoing the most change and why?**