

What We Will Do, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-19

REVIEW

I. WHAT HEAVEN IS

II. WHERE HEAVEN IS

III. WHAT HEAVEN IS LIKE

IV. WHAT WE WILL BE LIKE

V. HOW WE WILL RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER

VI. HOW WE WILL RELATE TO GOD

VII. WHAT WE WILL DO

A. Worship

B. Reign

LESSON

C. Serve

1) Heavenly service depicted

a) The imagery of priestly service We will have duties to perform. In Revelation 1:6 John says, "He hath made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father." What do priests do? They serve God. Hannah dedicated her child, Samuel, to the Lord by taking him to the high priest and leaving him to serve at the house of God. The keynote of the priesthood was intimate service. In the Old Testament we read that the priest had a unique relationship to God. In fact, no common Israelite could go near anything that symbolized the presence of God. Only the descendants of Levi could serve at the Tabernacle, and out of them only the descendants of Aaron could serve as priests. Numbers 16 shows how serious this exclusionary service was. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were Levites. They were not descendants of Aaron, but they nevertheless insisted on being priests, defying Moses. They and their families experienced terrible judgment as a result. The priesthood was indeed exclusive. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies--and then only once a year. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom; the Holy of Holies was exposed to everyone (Matt. 27:51). By graphic illustration God was saying that all who believe in Christ could enter His presence. So in the New Covenant every believer is a priest--we all have access to God. Peter calls us a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9) because we are kings and priests. First Peter 2:9 adds that we have been called "out of darkness into His marvelous light." To the Jewish reader that pictured walking into the Shekinah, the consuming presence of God. But now since Christ has made our way open, we can enter God's marvelous light. That's because we are "a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). So under the New Covenant every believer enjoys intimacy and access to God. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). We boldly enter God's presence to commune with Him, and out of that intimate communion we serve Him. There's no priesthood, no human intermediary between us and God. Paul said, "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men ... Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). In heaven we will serve as perfect priests, approaching not only the throne of grace, but also the throne of glory. Now we can go no farther than the throne of grace. If we approached the throne of glory, we would be consumed because of our sin. Revelation 21:3 says that in heaven God

will dwell among us and we will be His people. We won't ever need to cleanse ourselves by washing at a laver. We won't need to offer sacrifices. All that was completed in the past. Isaiah 58:13-14 says, "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure, and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." God has always wanted those who represent Him to delight in serving Him. And that's exactly what will happen in heaven. We will turn completely from our own pleasure and will call the sabbath rest of eternity a delight. Therefore He will make us to ride the heights. The Sabbath of heaven is indeed a rest, but it's not a rest of idleness: it's unwearied, unweakened, undistracted service of God. b) The illustrations of priestly service In Revelation 7 John says, "Behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' And all the angels were standing around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever, Amen.' And one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?' And I said to him, 'My lord, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'" (vv. 9-14). Those are the ones redeemed during the tribulation period, the seven-year period of judgment on the earth after the rapture of the church. The text continues, "For this reason, they are before the throne of God. And they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle [tent] over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes" (vv. 15-17). There will be no tears, exhaustion, heat, hunger, or thirst in heaven. We will be in the presence of the Lamb, who is our shepherd and our guide, serving as intimate priests. God will spread his tabernacle over us--we never be out of His presence. And the Lamb is at the center of everything. The Greek word translated "serve" (*latreu[ma]o*) speaks of the service a priest renders to God. In heaven we will not serve each other; we will serve God. We won't need to strengthen each other's weaknesses because we will all be perfect and like Christ. Revelation 22 says, "He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (vv. 1-5). We will reign forever. We will serve as priests forever. Although we don't know the specifics, we will serve God in some way. That suits our nature because God has built into man a creative drive to accomplish something productive. We derive pleasure from a job well done and knowing that others are pleased with our service. How wonderful to serve God in a way that pleases Him! Forever we will have the challenge of accomplishing something--and accomplishing it perfectly. And God won't make it automatically perfect; you'll do it yourself.

2) Earthly service rewarded

a) Summarized I believe that our service here on earth determines the nature of our service in

heaven. The service you will render then is directly proportional to how well you apply yourself here. That's your reward. Believers' rewards aren't something you wear on your head like a crown, stripes on your white robe, more rooms in your mansion, or a bigger and faster chariot to drive. Your reward in heaven will be your capacity of service. The greater your commitment to service here, the greater will be your capacity for service there. First Corinthians 4:5 says, "Do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God." When the Lord returns, each man will receive praise from God--and from God alone. To Paul no person's judgment of him mattered, not even his own (v. 3), because even if he wasn't aware of any guilt, that didn't mean he was innocent. He knew the day would come when God will judge his motives and service and would reward Him. Likewise, God plans to reward every believer. Notice that Paul says, "Each man's praise will come to him" (v. 5). Every believer will receive a reward. First Corinthians 3:12 says, "If any man builds upon the foundation [of Christ] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident." We will all be rewarded, but rewarded differently based on the value of our service. Some works will be the value of gold, silver, and precious stones. Others will be more on the level of wood, hay, and straw. Now wood, hay, and straw aren't evil; they just aren't as valuable or durable. So our reward will be the capacity with which we will be allowed to serve God in glory.b) Specified Scripture has much to say about rewards. Daniel 12:3 says, "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." Daniel is saying that the basis of our reward is our faithfulness in proclaiming righteousness. And the wisdom we manifest in this life will determine how we shine in eternity. In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 Paul says, "Who is our hope or joy or crown of exaltation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." Part of our reward in heaven will be the joy of seeing those who are there because of our faithfulness. In 1 Corinthians 9:25 Paul says, "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." Our reward will never diminish in value or die. In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul writes, "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." The "crown of righteousness" is eternal righteousness. The "crown of life" is eternal life. The "crown of joy" is eternal joy. So heaven's crowns aren't something we will wear; they are what we will experience: eternal life, eternal joy, eternal service, and eternal blessedness. First Peter 5:2-4 says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." Just as the crown of life is eternal life, and the crown of rejoicing is eternal rejoicing, the crown of glory is eternal glory. In Revelation 22:12 our Lord says, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." Your capacity for eternal joy, eternal glory, eternal service is related to what you are doing right now. Are you building with gold, silver, and precious stones or wood, hay, and straw? That ought to motivate our hearts. Sometimes people who mean well tell me to slow down and do less. But we really ought to spend ourselves here so we can have the greatest possible capacity throughout eternity to glorify God.

D. Rest

We will rest in heaven. Hebrews 4:1 speaks of "entering His rest." Verse 9 declares, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). One of the promises the Lord gives those who believe in His Son is that we will know rest from our labors. However from what we've already studied, we know that doesn't refer to an absence of service or

duty in heaven. Similarly, Luke 13:29 says we will recline at a banquet table in the kingdom of God, but that doesn't mean we'll just sit around all the time. When Hebrews 3-4 speaks of rest for the people of God, it means we will never be weary, weak, unfulfilled, or interrupted. It's a unique kind of rest.

Revelation 14:11, speaking of those who were judged in the tribulation, says, "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night." Contrast that with verse 12: "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."'"" Second Thessalonians 1:7 calls it relief.

That rest means the more we serve, the more refreshed we will be. The law of entropy, which causes everything to break down, will have ceased. There will be no debilitating forces. The more we fulfill our purpose, the more we will be refreshed. You will never expend any energy, be out of breath, or slow your step.

Puritan Richard Baxter wrote an entire book on this subject, entitled *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (London: Epworth, 1962 reprint). He said, "Rest, how sweet a word is this to mine ears. Me thinks the sound doth turn to substance and having entered at the ear doth possess my brain and thence descendeth down to my very heart. Me thinks I feel it stir and work and that through all my parts and powers but with a various work on my various parts. To my wearied senses and languid spirits, it seems a quieting powerful opiate. To my dulled powers it is spirit and life. To my dark eyes it is both eye salve and a prospective. To my taste it is sweetness. To mine ears it is melody. To my hands and feet it is strength and nimbleness. Me thinks I feel it digest as it proceeds and increase my native heat and moisture and lying as a reviving cordial at my heart from thence doth send forth lively spirits which beat through all the pulses of my soul.

"Rest, not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as these clods of flesh shall rest in the grave so our beasts must rest as well as we. Nor is it the satisfying of our fleshly lusts, nor such rest as the carnal world desireth. No, no, we have another kind of rest than these, rest we shall from all our labors which were but the way and means to rest, but yet that is the smallest part. O blessed rest, where we shall never rest day or night crying holy, holy, holy Lord God of sabbaths, when we shall rest from sin but not from worship, from suffering and sorrow but not from comfort. O blessed day when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing and praising, when my perfect soul and body together shall in these perfect things perfectly enjoy the most perfect God when God also who is love itself shall perfectly love me, and yea, and rest in His love to me as I shall rest in my love to Him and rejoice over me with joy and singing as I shall rejoice in Him." (Moody: Can't find this quote. Have sent up to John's office for help. Is this OK as is at least for now?)

E. Be Served

In Luke 12:35-37 Christ says, "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at table, and will come up and wait on them." There's one other thing we will experience in heaven: being served by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus used the imagery of a great lord returning to his palace where His slaves are waiting. Everything is prepared. They have been faithful to their lord. When he arrives, he calls them together. Rather than resting after his long journey or retiring for the night, the lord tells the slaves to sit down and allow him to serve them because of his gratitude for their service and readiness for his coming. He makes his slaves kings and prepares a feast for them. Then, astoundingly, he doesn't order other servants to serve them--he serves them himself!

We won't serve each other in heaven--the Lord Himself will serve us. When He returns and finds that

we have been faithful, He will serve us forever. How could heaven have a greater reward than that? It is wonderful to think of worshiping Him forever, of reigning with Him forever, of serving Him forever, and of resting forever. Yet most incredible of all is to realize that He will serve us forever. But it shouldn't surprise us too much. After all, He washed the disciples' feet because He loved them (John 13).

CONCLUSION

Puritan Thomas Watson said in his Body of Divinity that a true saint every day takes a turn in heaven--his thoughts and desires are like cherubim flying up to paradise. When we understand what the Bible teaches about heaven, it becomes sensible to look toward heaven and set our affections on it.

There are several benefits of looking toward heaven:

A. Looking toward heaven is evidence of genuine salvation.

A preoccupation with heaven is a good indication that you're saved. Is heaven where your heart is? Do you long to be in the heavenlies? Do you long to commune with God? Do you invest as much of your treasures there as possible? Are your affections set on things above, not on earthly things? A heart set on heaven is a heart set on God. And a heart set on God is a heart God has changed. The truest evidence of saving grace may well be a heavenly attitude.

B. Looking toward heaven produces Christian character.

Nothing compels us to be what God wants us to be more strongly than the truths about heaven. If you understand your inheritance and the rewards, glories, joys, and privileges of heaven, and you understand that Christ Himself will serve you forever out of gratitude for what you have done, that will compel you to excellence of character. Communing with the Lord of heaven through prayer, meditation, and devotion purges the heart and produces obedience.

C. Looking toward heaven is the truest path to joy.

If you want to be miserable, focus on this world. If you want to be joyful, focus on heaven. David said that the light of God's face gladdens the heart (Ps. 21:6). Paul said that the eternal weight of glory is far beyond anything we suffer now (2 Cor. 4:17).

D. Looking toward heaven protects us from temptation and sin.

One of Satan's main temptations is to get us to focus on earthly matters. But a believer whose mind is on heaven, who longs for full righteousness and the presence of God, is not easy prey for Satan.

E. Looking toward heaven maintains the vigor of our spiritual service.

If you run slowly in the Christian race, contributing little in terms of Christian service and financial giving, you obviously have little regard for the promised prize. If you properly valued the heavenly prize, it would compel you to give of yourself and your resources. Fervency springs from a vision of heaven's reward.

F. Looking toward heaven honors God before all.

When your heart is set on heaven, you demonstrate your love for God. Your faithful service gives the people who see you a high view of God--they see God not only as all demanding, but as all worthy. Dwell on the heavenlies and you will honor God. Dwell on the earthly things and you will dishonor God by implying they are more valuable than He is.

G. Looking toward heaven repays God.

God always sets His heart on us. Therefore it's only fair that we set our hearts on Him! There's certainly nothing in this world worthy of such attention.

David said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15, KJV). Will anything less than that satisfy you?

Focusing on the Facts

1. What special privilege did the priests enjoy?

2. Explain the significance of Matthew 27:51.
3. What would 1 Peter 2:9 picture in the mind of an Israelite?
4. Are there any human mediators of the new covenant? Support your answer with Scripture.
5. Who are the people in white robes in Revelation 7:9? What are they doing?
6. Will we serve each other in heaven? Explain.
7. What will believers' rewards actually be? On what basis will they be given?
8. _____ will receive a reward.
9. What is the difference between gold, silver, precious stones and wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12)?
10. Heaven's crowns aren't something we will wear; they are what we will _____. Explain.
11. Define the rest we will enjoy in heaven.
12. Explain the significance of Luke 12:35-37.

Pondering on the Principles

1. Under Old Testament law only the high priest had direct access into the place that represented God's presence. The people were kept from it by a veil, symbolizing that God had not yet opened the way into His presence (cf. Heb. 9:7-8). But when Christ died, God ripped that veil from top to bottom, demonstrating that the way to His presence is available to all. Do you take your access to God's presence for granted? Have you grown accustomed to that privilege? Read and meditate on the truths of Hebrews 10:19-25, and thank God for the access to Him that you enjoy.
2. Take time now to reread the benefits of looking toward heaven on pages 8-10. How many of those benefits were present in your life before you began this study? If several weren't, perhaps your heavenly perspective had become clouded. How many of those benefits are present in your life now? Did you progress? If not, perhaps you have merely accumulated more academic knowledge about heaven and have failed to apply it. Ask God to make His Word live in you. Determine for the reality of God's Word to permeate every aspect of your life.

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