

Title: Heaven: Coming Home for the First Time

Introduction

- “Chronicles of Narnia”, C.S. Lewis

Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- everything in life right now is not what God has in mind in saving us
- Life *then* (what God has in store with us for all eternity) is why we are saved!
- God’s display of His goodness and kindness revealed continuously forever!
- The only way to enter into this reality is through Jesus Christ.

I. LIFE THEN - What will heaven be like? (place, presence, peace, prize, peoples)

A. Place - Heaven is a place that is real, physical, material, and eternal

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- A physical place where we will have new glorified bodies.
 - Currently: believers go to an intermediate state present with Jesus but await when final New Heaven and New Earth is established forever.

Revelation 21:1-2 (The New Heaven and the New Earth)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

- A physical earth, back in Eden, but Eden plus!
- The Tree of Life in Revelation is described as continuous from before but better than ever before
 - Ex: Chronicles of Narnia (C.S. Lewis) - characters able to run but not grow tired (familiar yet new and glorious)

B. Presence - Heaven is where God’s presence abides fully

God is with us! Covenant fulfilled, in more intimate ways than we ever thought possible

Revelation 21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away

every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- God is personally presence - He Himself wipes away every tear
- Book: “God is the Gospel” (John Piper)
 - The reason for the Gospel is that we would be with Him - God!
 - Why amazing? Consider who God is! Everything that is good, glorious, and beautiful.

Isaiah 60:19-20

The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Throne of God (security), light of God (truth and intimate presence), and face of God in Christ (our completion)
2 Corinthians 4:4-6 (conversion)

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (sanctification)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

1 John 3:2 (glorification)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

C. Peace - Heaven is where God's peace pervades forever

- No more sorrow, pain, death - all new!
- Only life - no curse!

Revelation 21:4-5

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Revelation 22:2-3

through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

D. Prize - Heaven is where our prize will be enjoyed forever

- Two levels:
 - Corporate and equal
 - Individual and discriminate

1. ***Corporate and Equal***

- Believers: Receive the full blessings of sonship and full inheritance through Christ.

Ephesians 2:7

so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Revelation 22:1-2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

- Non-believers: Will be banished

Revelation 21:7-8

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

2. *Individual and Discriminate*

- All servants of God will be individually rewarded

Matthew 5:11-12

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Those who represent Christ well and undergo persecution will receive a reward fitting to how person showed faithfulness to Christ

Matthew 6:3-6

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- God sees all things - secret and hidden - and will reward accordingly.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

God's Rewards to Believers

- we will all experience God with fullness yet some will experience quantitative more than others
- *Analogy*: three different sized containers submerged in the ocean.
 - All are filled with ocean water and are full
 - But smaller containers experience less fullness than larger containers
 - Likewise, saints will experience different levels of fullness of God.

- *Analogy*: different attendees of an orchestra (newbie, plays some instruments, full-fledged expert musician)
 - They all agree the performance was beautiful. But they all appreciate it differently.
- Life now makes a difference to life forever

E. People's - Heaven is an expansive plurality of peoples gather in worship of the King.

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

- God's tabernacle is among men, a place of honor and worship of God

Revelation 21:22-27

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- the glory of nations will come (distinct national and cultural identities) to worship the King

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

- people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worship God
- See parallels to Isaiah 25:6-9

II. LIFE NOW - How shall we then live now?

A. Passion for Christ

- To be in His presence then, to see His face then, will be our joy and delight.
- So, should this not increasingly be the case now?

Philippians 3:8

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

B. Purity of Life

2 Peter 3:11-13

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- Why live in righteousness now where it will all pass?
- Because that is how life will be forever

- Pursue now what we will be then!

C. Perseverance in Faith

- Those who endure to the end, who overcome, that are saved.
 - See each of the letters in Revelation (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)
- Daily our longing to be faithful to our Savior and Lord

James 1:12

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

D. Pursuit of God's Mission

- Heaven and hell are real. Every person is either destined for heaven or hell. The only difference is knowing and believing in Jesus.
- Ours is the duty and delight of sharing the good news!

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Romans 10:15

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

E. Prayer with Fervency and Focus

- With so much at stake, both joy to be had, yet so much misery for those outside of Christ.

Acts 3:19-20

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

- Our prayers should target both:
 - Our growth to be more and more fitting to our destiny
 - Other's reception of the Gospel by which alone they may repent, believe in Christ, and be saved.