



What is heaven?
2/14/10 HPBC
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- Intro: common perspectives on heaven:
 - Pop music
 - Christian music
 - Big big house: It's a big, big house with lots and lots of room.
A big, big table with lots and lots of food.
A big, big yard where we can play football.
A big, big house, it's my father's house.
All I know is a big, big house with rooms for everyone.
All I know is lots of land where we can play and run.
 - Contrast with: The Bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face
I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth but on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land.
 - Tonight I want to help you see that these are two *radically* different images of heaven
 - Are they mutually exclusive?
 - Tonight, as we answer "What is heaven?" I want to push us to consider a different but closely related question: "What is heaven *to you*?" Is it what we see in the Bible?
- The biblical story . . . explain structure (9 movements, 4 rabbit trails, 4 ways to live now in preparation for heaven)
 - Movement 1: Creation
 - God created a very good place. Seems as though what makes the place good is not only that it's a physical paradise, but that God and man have fellowship there. (speaking, bringing animals; not God's *presence* in ch 3 that shocks but awareness of their own nakedness) (3:8-10)
 - Note physical characteristics of the land . . . will come up later . . . (**Gen 2:4-10**)
 - Movement 2: Fall (3:22-24)
 - Man rebels against God & rejects his rule. Essentially idolatry as Adam makes an idol of his wife, choosing her over God. As part of his punishment he was expelled from the place of God's presence and blessing. He found himself not only distanced from God, but ultimately under the curse of God.
 - Babel: tower to heaven seems to do two things
 - Join earth to heaven & reverse the curse
 - Declare independence from God by making a name for themselves.
 - Movement 3: Abraham/patriarchs
 - Genesis 12ff God takes initiative to restore reconcile people to himself and restore fellowship . . . God promises a land and blessing to Abraham and

through him to all the nations of the earth. Shadow of a restoration of paradise in the presence of God

- Looked for a better country (**Heb 11:8-16 esp. 16**)
 - Strangers and exiles (v 13 cf. G 23:4; 47:9) Even while living in the Promised Land Abraham and Jacob recognize that is not their home.
 - Men who have been promised a heritage and a land and a nation are looking to heaven!!! (where in Scripture?)
- Rabbit Trail #1: Where is heaven?
 - Where God is (G 14:19; 19:24; 21:17; 22:11, 15; **Psalm 11:4**; Psalm 115:16; **Isaiah 66:1**)
 - In OT rare to find someone who goes to heaven. (Elijah is exception 2 Kings 2:11.) OT storyline emphasizes separation from God brought brought by the fall
 - Introduces the problem that the NT solves
 - Ultimate destination is much more than just “heaven”; also a new earth (contra Gen 1:1; 2:4; cf **Is 65:17**; **Rom 8:19-21**; 2 Pet 3:13; **Rev 21:1**)
 - Apparently, radically replacing this earth, at least its present form, not its very existence
 - Heb 1:11-12; **12:26-27**; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 21:1
- Movement 4: Israel
 - From the descendants of the patriarchs God creates a people and delivers them from bondage and promising them rest
 - **Psalm 95:6-11** explains how God intended to lead Israel out of Egypt in to a place of rest he prepared for them in the land he had promised Abraham and their fathers. They rebelled and thousands, even millions died in the wilderness
 - 1 Corinthians 10 describes how these things happened to them as examples *for us* and were written *for our instruction*.
 - Heb 3-4 ties those passages together directly, quoting *5 times* from Psalm 95. It instructs professing believers 1) not to harden our hearts and 2) to cling to the gospel so e might enter the Sabbath rest that remains for God’s people.
 - Clearly refers to heaven
- Movement 5: New Covenant
 - Israel’s failure vividly displayed mankind’s inability to draw near to God if the outcome depended on his obedience. Even a chosen, privileged people would fail dramatically without new hearts.
 - God provides a solution to this problem in the New Covenant, in which he makes a way to give his people new hearts (Jeremiah 31:33-34; **Ezekiel 36:25-28**)
- Movement 6: Jesus
 - Jesus’ ministry is to make a way for God’s people to be reconciled to him and restored to his presence. By his death he offers one sacrifice for *all* the sins of *all* God’s people.
 - Author of Hebrews describes Jesus ministry as a New Covenant ministry, quoting from Jeremiah (**Hebrews 8:8-12; 9:15**)

- In Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 Jesus blood inaugurates, or establishes, the arrival of this New Covenant.
- Kingdom announcement
 - Rabbit Trail #2: Who goes to heaven?
 - Poor in spirit, persecuted for righteousness sake, keeps the commandments (Matthew 5:3, 10, 12, 19)
 - One who does the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21)
 - People from everywhere (Matthew 8:11)
 - Those who repent & trust like children (Matthew 18:1-3; Matthew 19:14)
 - The one who keeps all the commandments (Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22)
 - The one who fears God, acknowledges God's righteous judgment, and looks to the Savior (Luke 23:43)
 - **Summary: two kinds of people go to heaven**
 - **Those who keep all God's commandments**
 - **Those who acknowledge they can't & that they deserve death, but cast themselves at God's mercy hoping in the provision he has made.**
 - **IOW, Ephesians 2:4-10)**
- Movement 7: Church
 - Kingdom of heaven breaking in to this age
 - Citizenship: heaven (Phil 3:20)
 - Tension: between two worlds (**Hebrews 12:22**)
 - Function: ambassadors (2 Cor 5)
 - Status:
 - Waiting (**2 Pet 3:13**)
 - Hoping (1 Pet 1:3-4)
 - Preparing (**Eph 5:25-33**)
- Movement 8: New Heavens/New Earth
 - Kingdom consummated (Revelation 3:12; **21:1-3, 10**)
 - Unveiling of a city, unifying of heaven and earth
 - Rabbit trail #3: What are the NH/NE?
 - Not a new concept: **Isaiah 65:17-19**; 66:22-23
 - Reconstituted universe with a particular focus on a city, uniting heaven and earth; uniting God and his people
 - As we look at the whole story of the Bible, we see places of God's particular presence and blessing—Eden, holy of holies, heaven
 - In the NH/NE we see elements of those places reappear, converge, and expand into images that surpass anything human minds ever imagined.
 - John describes the New Jerusalem as a restored Eden where the redeemed will fulfill God's original intention for the creation of man: They will serve and worship God and the Lamb, whose glory will fill the city.
 - As a place

- Jn 14: Jesus prepares place
 - R21:3—where God dwells with his people
 - R21:7-8—that God’s people inherit
 - R21:24, 26—where the glory of the nations is brought
- As a people
 - R21:9-10
- Rabbit Trail #4 What will we do in heaven?
 - Reign, eat fruit, worship, walk around (R 21-22) hang out with animals (Is 65)
 - Will we play harps? C.S. Lewis: There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of “Heaven” ridiculous by saying they do not want “to spend eternity playing harps.” The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups, they should not talk about them. All the scriptural imagery (harps, crowns, gold, etc.) is, of course, a **merely symbolical attempt to express the inexpressible**. Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people (not all) music is the thing known in the present life which most strongly suggests **ecstasy and infinity**. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God in eternity **share His splendour and power and joy**. Gold is mentioned to suggest the **timelessness** of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the **preciousness** of it. *Mere Christianity*, book 3, chapter 10 (on “Hope”)
- If our question is “what will we do there?” I want to gently push back and propose that we’re asking the wrong question: The emphasis in the text isn’t *what we do* but *who we’re with*
 - Father
 - Husband (The bride eyes not her garment)
 - Redeemer (I will glory in my Redeemer)
 - Brothers and sisters
- **Psalm 16:11**
 - Lewis: God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to feed on . . . God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.
 - Piper: What is the ultimate good in the good news? It all ends in one thing: God himself. All the words of the gospel lead to him, or they are not gospel. For example, “salvation” is not good news if it only saves from hell and not for God. “Forgiveness” is not good news if it only gives relief from guilt and doesn’t open the way to God. “Justification” is not good news if it only makes us legally acceptable to God, but doesn’t bring fellowship with God. “Redemption” is not good news if it only liberates us from bondage, but doesn’t bring us to God. “Adoption” is not good news if it only puts us in the Father’s family but not in his arms. .

- Used to enjoy soccer, then I became a coach
- Used to be friends w/ woman now my wife then I cultivated a relationship . . .
- Implications for heaven:
 - Consciously re-orient how you think about this world and the next.
 - Deliberately evaluate your priorities in light of your conclusions.
 - Follow through with hard choices of time/energy/money.
 - Pray that God would change your heart.
- VoV prayer
 - Quicken our hunger and thirst after the realm above.
 - Here we can have the world, there we shall have you in Christ;
 - Here is a life of longing and prayer, there is assurance without suspicion, asking without refusal;
 - Here are temporary comforts, more burden than benefit, there is joy without sorrow, comfort without suffering, love without unfaithfulness, rest without weariness.
 - Give us to know that heaven is all love, where the eye affects the heart, and the continual viewing of your beauty keeps the soul in continual transports of delight.
 - Give us to know that heaven is all peace, where error, pride, rebellion, passion raise no head.
 - Give us to know that heaven is all joy, the end of believing, fasting, praying, mourning, humbling, watching, fearing, complaining;
 - And lead us to it soon . . . Amen.