

THE DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN – PART 2

The Present or Intermediate or Temporary Heaven

- The present heaven is the place that Christians go when they die...but it is not the heaven where we'll live forever...This is a temporary heaven...one that is not our final destination
- This is different than our eternal destination – the New Heavens and New Earth where we will live in resurrected bodies on a resurrected earth
- Will we live forever in heaven? → It depends on what we mean by heaven
- Will we be with the Lord forever? → Yes!
- Will we always be with him in exactly the same place that heaven is now? → No!
- The heaven we will go to when we die is a temporary dwelling place (the present heaven), a stop along the way to our final destination (the new heavens and earth)
- Revelation 4-5 describe the present heaven; Revelation 21-22 describe the New Heaven/Earth

It is a Majestic Place

Revelation 4:1-8 ~ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say

- The veil of heaven was pulled back and John was given a glimpse into the present heaven
- The first thing John mentions in his description of heaven is the "throne" (vs. 2)
- The throne is the center of heaven and the focal point of God's presence
- Though John does not name the One sitting on the throne, it is obvious who He is: God Himself
- It is the same God Isaiah saw: Isaiah 6:1 ~ In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.
- John described God in verse 3...laboring to find words that can even slightly capture the glory of this scene
- That's why the word "like" occurs so many times in this chapter: vs. 1, 3, 6, 7
- John is describing a scene of breathtaking glory and dazzling beauty, so spectacular that it passes the limits of human language
 - Jasper – a crystal clear jewel...like the color of light...that's why he may be referring to a diamond
 - Sardius (NIV = carnelian) – a fiery, blood red ruby...where the city Sardis got its name
 - Emerald-like rainbow around the throne
- Verse 4 describes the 24 thrones around God's throne, probably redeemed church saint

- Notice too God’s terrifying awe...vs. 5 ~ flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder
- Verse 6 describes a “sea of glass”...This sea is metaphorical since there is no sea in heaven (Rev 21:1)
- Verses 6-8 describe the four living creatures
- According to Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel (1:4-21 and 10:15, 22), these are angelic creatures...heaven’s worship leaders

It is a God-Centered Place

Revelation 4:8-11 ~ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

- Heaven is thoroughly preoccupied with God...He is the subject and object of worship...worship is to Him
- And it is about Him...notice that the 4 living creatures worship God in response to his character:
 - Vs. 8 ~ holy holy holy (holiness)
 - Vs. 8 ~ the Lord God, the Almighty (sovereignty and power)
 - Vs. 8 ~ who was and who is and who is to come (eternality)
 - Vs. 11 ~ for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created (creator)
- Heaven is a place where God is worshiped in response to who He is
- Worship in heaven is theologically-informed, theologically-driven, theologically-propelled

It is a Christ-Centered Place

Revelation 5:1-7 ~ I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

- John describes seeing in God’s right hand a book or a scroll
- This is probably a title deed to the earth which God the Father will give to Christ
- We are not told in this chapter what the scroll contains but rather how He will claim the earth as His own inheritance (described in Revelation 6 as the seals are broken and judgment is released upon the earth)
- It is a book whose contents are enacted...not read – the end result of which is the earth being given to Christ as the rightful owner and ruler of it
- Verse 2-3 indicates the problem with this scroll is that there is no one to open it
- And for a moment it seems somewhat hopeless...and John begins to weep (vs. 4)
- But there is someone who is worthy to break the seals → the Lamb, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David...Christ himself (vs. 5)
- There is a man who is uniquely qualified...Christ has overcome through His work at the cross
- His perfect life, His perfect sacrifice, His victory over sin, and His resurrection from the dead qualifies Him to take the scroll!!

- vs. 7 ~ And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.
- Imagine the scene...Christ steps up to the throne of God and takes the scroll out of the hand of God because it is His right to do so!!!
- This is the culminating act of history... This is when the ultimate goal of redemption is about to be seen...this is when paradise is about to be regained and restored on earth
- Heaven is consumed in its worship of the Lion and the Lamb...Heavenly worship is Christ focused!

It is a Gospel-Centered Place

Revelation 5:8-14 ~ When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

- Heaven is thoroughly preoccupied with the fact that Christ was slain and He has saved us!
- That's the reason this heavenly chorus breaks forth – it results from the realization that the long-anticipated defeat of sin, death, and Satan is about to be accomplished and the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth in triumph and establish His glorious millennial kingdom.....the curse will be reversed...the believing remnant of Israel will be saved...the church will be honored, exalted, and granted the privilege of reigning with Christ
- Christ and His work on the cross are the focus of this gradually expanding chorus of praise which erupts in heaven
- Notice what John calls Christ...the "Lamb" (vs. 8, 12, 13)
- The point is unmistakable...this is a reference to His sacrifice....He is the Passover lamb
 - Christ is referred to as a lamb only once in the OT – Is 53:7
 - He is referred to as a lamb only 4 times in the NT outside of Revelation – John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet 1:19
 - But in the book of Revelation, He appears as the Lamb 31 times!
- Heavenly worship is fueled by a deep awareness of Christ's sacrifice!
- Notice that as the Lamb He was "slain" (vs. 9, 12)
- Though Christ lives in heaven, He still bears the marks of his sacrificial death!
- Forever in heaven we will behold the wounds in his hands and in his side!
- Forever we will be reminded of the fact that our sin was costly!
- Forever we will be reminded that we had a debt we could not pay and He paid a debt He did not owe!
- These marks will serve as perpetual reminds of the great cost of our salvation and redemption
- And this is why heaven sings...and this is why heaven attributes worth and power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing to the Lamb....because He was slain!

<p>Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon the throne Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns, All music but its own Awake, my soul, and sing, Of Him who died for thee And hail Him as thy matchless King, Thru all eternity</p>

Crown Him the Lord of love, Behold His hands and side
 Those wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified
 No angel in the sky, Can fully bear that sight
 But downward bends his wond'ring eye, At mysteries so bright

- And because of this work, Christ has “purchased for God men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (vs. 9)
- Vs. 10 ~ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.
- The end result of our redemption is not just having our sins forgiven and getting to go to heaven forever
- No, the end result of our salvation is described in this verse:
 - Kingdom – we are part of God’s kingdom
 - Priests – we have complete access to God’s presence for worship and service
 - Reign – we get to reign with Christ during the Millennial kingdom
- This is the effect of being saved through Christ! These are the results of redemption!
- Heaven is a Gospel-saturated place!

It is a Corporate Place

- Heaven is a place where we are in community with one another
- There are 3 concentric circles of worship in Revelation 5
- First circle: vs. 8-10 (4 living creatures and 24 elders)
- Second Circle: vs. 11-12 (4 living creatures, 24 elders, and myriads and myriads of angels)
- Third Circle: vs. 13-14 (all above including everything in heaven, on earth, under earth, and on the sea)
- Here heavenly worship reaches its crescendo as all of the created order in the entire universe engages in the worship of God and the Lamb
- The worship in heaven is public and corporate!