

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Life with God: Heaven**  
**Pastors Dave Scherrer and Mike Brown - May 8, 2011**

Unpacking Heaven is not a particularly fair project. When asked of Jesus it must have been frustrating to try to describe the eternal home of creation these well intentioned but oh so finite disciples. Imagine it this way: Describing this world to a child still in the womb,

**Corinthians 2:9**

**But, as it is written,  
'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him'**

So it may be impossible. I actually think that it will be impossible for us to describe even when we are breathing celestial air. Still it is important, very important! This Kingdom of Heaven mindset is critical for living well now. And it has life and death consequences:

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Remember how I put it last week; those who follow after Jesus are living life among the dead headed to life among the living. So let's continue to explore life with God in Heaven. This may sound funny Mike but many ask, "Will I be myself?" Will I be so eternal that I don't recognize myself?

**Life with God: What will it be like in Heaven?**  
**Will we be ourselves in heaven?**

This question of being ourselves is an interesting one, to me. If we allow, it will take us deeply into what philosophers call metaphysics and its special branch called ontology: the nature of being. While that discussion is well beyond our scope, what we are really asking is "Will I still be me?" That, of course, begs the question, "What is it that makes me, me?"

Here's a fun example to think about. Would I say that I am the same person as I was at 5 years old? My body has changed: it is older, I'm now taller, and many of my cells have died and been replaced; I know more, I have more experience...am I the same person? I would say essentially, "Yes, I am." Those things that make me essentially "Mike" are still present although some may be more developed than when I was 5 or even 25.

As we consider what makes us who we are, here is one thing we can say: generally speaking, in the world of science today where metaphysical materialism is the prevailing philosophy—that there is nothing beyond the material things, no supernatural—what makes us who we are is our specific DNA arrangement. The only thing that separates us from the animals is our evolved DNA. However, as Christians we believe that we are an integrated body/soul: a material body and an immaterial, or supernatural, soul. We are an ensouled body *and* an embodied soul.

So, what about scriptural references? There are a few that help us to understand that we will continue to be unique individuals.

Unique Individuals

*I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven...* (Matthew 8:11, ESV)

Here we see that the unique individuals, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be in heaven.

*There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his*



*side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'* (Luke 16:19–24, ESV)

Again, we have specific individuals with the rich man knowing Lazarus and Abraham.

*Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.* (John 8:56, ESV)

Here not only do we again see Abraham alive and aware, but we hear from Jesus that he is expressing the emotion of gladness.

Will we be angels?

This is one thing we won't be. We will not be angels. In fact, it appears that being a co-regent with Christ means we will rule over the angels:

*Do you not know that we are to judge angels?* (1 Corinthians 6:3, ESV)

**What will our bodies be like?**

Can we say something about our resurrected bodies? Perhaps something. There is great speculation over how old we might be in heaven. Some say that since Jesus died in His 30s, that we will be resurrected in our 30s. I don't know. What about my Body Mass Index (BMI), will I be in the perfect range? I don't know. Scripture is silent on many things concerning our bodies.

What can we say, then? Here are a few things we can say about our new bodies:

- Races will be preserved  
*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...* (Revelation 7:9, ESV)
- It will be immortal  
*For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'* (1 Corinthians 15:53–54, ESV)
- It will be incorruptible  
*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.* (Revelation 21:4, ESV)
- It will be glorious, with power (capacity)  
*So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* (1 Corinthians 15:42–43, ESV)
- It will be spiritual (not animal-like)  
*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* (1 Corinthians 15:44–45, ESV)
- It will be Christ-like  
*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.* (Philippians 3:20–21, ESV)

Dave, even in this there are many, many unknowns. However, here is what I do know. Last week I said that Scripture tells us that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So, I expect that my new body will be the body that allows me to best glorify God and enjoy Him forever...remember, it is all about God's glory.

So, with that Dave, what can we say about our relationships in Heaven?

You know that this has been a source of concern and misunderstanding so it seems good to deal with this. Do you remember the Sadducees confronting Jesus once with a sarcastic question recorded in Matthew chapter 22?

***<sup>28</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."***

<sup>29</sup> But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." <sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>31</sup> And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: <sup>32</sup> "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." <sup>33</sup> And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

### **We will retain our identities**

**Read this with me:**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

Behold! I tell you a mystery. *We* shall not all sleep, but *we* shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and *we* shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

Do you see all the *we's* here? Scripture's consistent use of "we" indicates continuity into heaven. Bruce Milne writing on heaven says of this passage; "We can conclude with conviction that life in the heavenly world will preserve personal identity. There will be continuity of our personhood. The self with which we were endowed with by the Creator in his gift of life to us . . . that same self will endure into eternity."

But remember the second part of that collective passage we will be changed. As Mike mentioned a moment ago perishable puts on imperishable, immortality swallows up mortality and in that forever state, I will be more me than I have ever experienced in this world. Now finally without my sin nature to hold me back, I can finally experience life abundant.

Remember how the disciples walked with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus and how they did not recognize Jesus until he took bread and broke it. And one said; "It is the Lord- Didn't our hearts burn!" I don't think he was cloaking his identity; he was just so imperishable that they did not recognize him at first.

And that brings us to a second question much like the first about our families.

### **We will be united with our family and friends who have died before us**

**When Paul was trying to comfort the people of Thessalonica about the death of their loved ones, he wrote (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17):** And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

We will know and love each other better - truer and fuller – because there will be no more fear and pain and shame – no psychological and emotional wounded-ness to keep us apart. We will know each other in Spirit and in Truth just as we will know God in Spirit and in Truth.

#### **1 John 3:2**

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.

### **I also believe that either we will not remember the bad things of earth or they will have lost all their power to hurt and shame us**

The momentary light afflictions that the scripture call our hardships will finally take on their true appearance too, as threads on the back of the tapestry of life.

**So what is your opinion mike - with these new bodies will we get hungry? Will we eat and drink? Grow and learn? Or do we check in perfect so there are no more brownies? Or will it be that I can eat all the brownies I want and my waist line will never grow? Or does the stuff of this world have nothing to do with Heaven?**

## Eat/Drink

As for eating and drinking, I think it is pretty clear that we will.

- Genesis 1:29-30—The first man and wife were vegetarians in the garden
- Genesis 18:1-2, 5-8—With Abraham, God (a theophany) and angels ate
- Isaiah 25:6—We participate in a future feast for God's people
- Luke 22:18—The fourth cup of the Passover awaits
- Luke 22:29-30—We eat/drink at Jesus' table in His kingdom
- John 21:10-15—The resurrected Jesus eating fish
- Revelation 2:7—We will eat of the tree of life
- Revelation 19:9—We attend the wedding supper of the lamb

## Grow/Learn

This kind of question requires a different approach, since there are really no Scriptures that speak to it. However, before we make some observations, I'd like to address the underlying motive of our questions. If it is simple curiosity, because we are curious people excited about our permanent home, then that is great. However, there can be another motive driving us...fear.

Perhaps we question out of fear of what lies ahead for us. For example, maybe we really have this underlying question: "Will it be boring in heaven?" What we are really expressing is our fear that after a few years Heaven will begin to seem like Hell; after all, who wants to sit around on a cloud all day playing a harp...for millions upon millions of years. To address this fear, recall Genesis 3:1-6—

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.''" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*<sup>(1)</sup>



Satan got Adam and Eve to believe that God did not have their best interest at heart. When we wonder about Heaven, we have to ensure that we are not asking these questions because we also hear the hiss of the snake—Satan telling us that God does not have our best interest at heart. Who among us wouldn't view Heaven as the worst kind of Hell if it went on and on and on into eternity with nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing to explore, nothing to create, no arts, no physical activity...But, to wonder about Heaven out of fear is to hear Satan whispering to us.

We need not fear God! Let's ask ourselves, do we really believe that God the Father would send His Son to die for us in order to bore us to death in Heaven? About 1,800 years ago, one of the early Christians, Irenaeus, said this: "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God."<sup>1</sup> God knows exactly what will be good for us for eternity, and we will have had all of the junk in us that keeps us from fully living, from fully enjoying life here removed. I can hardly wait!

So, to answer this question about learning in Heaven we remember that while we are not God, we are made in the image of God. So, let's look at God.

- Creator: Scripture tells us that God is a creator God; even now as his creation we also create. Therefore, why wouldn't I continue to create for all eternity? Won't that be a blast!
- All knowing: God is all knowing (omniscient). I will never be all knowing because that is for God alone. So, I presume that means I will always have something to learn. Last week I quoted John 17:3, that eternal life is to know God and Christ. I said that I believe I will spend all eternity getting to know an infinite God...and many, many other things.

And that is how I see my life in God's new creation. God's goal for me is that I become Christ-like (Romans 8:29). For me, becoming Christ-like will take an eternity. I will spend all eternity learning to love like Christ; to be in relationship with the Father like Him; to judge like Him; and to have His wisdom, grace, mercy, patience.

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<sup>1</sup> Schaff, P. (2000). *Vol. 1: The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (electronic ed.) (0). Garland, TX: Galaxie Software.

I guess I'm saying, Dave, that when I am resurrected I expect to be Christ-like in ways I am not now; however, I fully expect to continue to become Christ-like over all eternity. You see, there has been a long-held view within the church that Adam and Eve were created to be on a journey to become Christ-like; eating the forbidden fruit disrupted the journey. Since I have received Christ I believe I am back on that journey now, even in this "natural body" that we talked about earlier and when resurrected I will continue the journey in my new "spiritual journey." That may even include coming to know, as God does, good from evil.

And that brings us to the last question for today: will I have free will in Heaven, and, if so, then will the possibility of sin in Heaven exist?

***Will there be sin in Heaven?***

***Revelation 21:1-4***

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. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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."

The first change from their earthly life believers in heaven will experience is that God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. The prophet Isaiah said much the same thing: (25:8).

***He will swallow up death forever;***

***and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,***

***and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,***

***for the LORD has spoken.***

Remember, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). Since Christ "*bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed*" (1 Pet. 2:24).

It has all been paid for us who believe on Jesus Christ the absence of anything to be sorry about—no sadness, no disappointment, no pain. There will be no tears of misfortune, tears over lost love, tears of remorse, tears of regret, tears over the death of loved ones, or tears for any other reason. This will not be true for those who Christ does not know, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But not for us!

The perfect holiness and absence of sin that will characterize heaven will mean that there will be no more pain and no more death. On the cross, Jesus was "*wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5).

All these changes that will mark the new heaven and the new earth indicate that "the first things have passed away." Old human experience related to the original, fallen creation is gone forever, and with it the mourning, suffering, sorrow, disease, pain, and death that has characterized it since the Fall.

Romans 8:18-23 The Message

<sup>18-21</sup> ***That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.***

<sup>22-25</sup> ***All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.***

The every best of this world is only a shadow of the worst of Heaven, but if we look we can find  
majesty and power and dominion and glory here under our very noses.  
Creation calls