

KNOCKING ON HEAVEN'S DOOR

What if we could choose to live in heaven? It is tempting to imagine what heaven will be like. Even though we know our minds are not equal to the task. For one thing, we are sure that hot fudge sundaes and all of the other culinary delights that we describe as heavenly will be there on our supper tables. Some styles of clothing, described here as being absolutely divine, might even qualify for attire. We must not forget the clouds upon which we will float as we listen to harp music. Even our more realistic (because it is based upon scripture) image of a mighty city with streets of gold is only a description of the new Jerusalem that will be a part of heaven. If that description really defined heaven, then we could create heaven here on earth without the intervention of God. Heaven though, is not a place. It is the presence of God and that is what will result in so much joy in eternity. Just as the absence of God will be pure hell. If His presence is what defines heaven, then it would appear that it is not necessary to die in order to experience it.

It is amusing that we invent religion in an attempt to get men to heaven, while God has been working on ways to bring heaven to men. Heaven existed on the earth in the garden of Eden because God walked there. When man disobeyed, God withdrew and took heaven with Him. He tried again by having a dwelling place fit for His glory created in the Holy of Holies. There, under certain conditions, man could once again meet with Him directly. The last focused manifestation of God on the earth was in a form that could actually dwell in the presence of sin without conflict, for it was created to carry all of the sins of the world. The twentieth chapter of Luke tells us that the kingdom of God is like a man who owned a vineyard (a pleasant place) and journeyed into a far country. A place far different from His normal home.

To this place, He came in the form of Jesus Christ. He came as a foreigner to a land of sin, but died as a citizen. I love how Bartimaeus defined Jesus as a "son of David". Not only did it fulfill prophecy, but it also describes the results of David's worship. When David praised the Lord, he brought the presence of God into this world. Jesus was called "Emmanuel" or "God with us" and came into the world as a result of prayer. Because of him, heaven resided among the people of His time. Some recognized His origins and like the woman at the well, could not help but tell everyone of their revelation. Others, like Judas, missed His significance altogether. Judas kissed the gate to heaven, then turned and went to hell.

Shortly after, through the death of Christ, the divine became available to be personally experienced by everyone. Jesus told His disciples just before His death that He was with them, but shortly, He would be in them and they would be in Him. He was speaking about the infilling of the Holy Ghost, through which they would become part of the body of Christ. The covering of this world was cast away when He took up residence in their lives. When we become the dwelling place of heaven, we become clothed in a robe of righteousness. It is available by seeking Him and His righteousness first. It happens when we realize that we can not come before Him wearing our own brand of holiness, but must come before Him naked, with no pretense, in order for Him to cover us. In garments that are truly divine.

Heaven is not a distant goal, but a present opportunity. The kingdom of God is peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Church buildings are places where the presence of God often dwells as the users worship Him. Because of this intermittent contact with heaven, they are often characterized by a sense of peace. Likewise, lives within which God, the Holy Ghost, a piece of heaven resides, are also typified by a lingering tranquility. Left behind from use by the Prince of Peace.

Anytime we wish to enjoy His company, we can do so by worshiping Him. Psalms 100:4 informs us that we can enter His gates by means of our praise and enter His courts by means of our thanksgiving. In fact, the praise of His people is where He lives. No praise, no habitation. If we want to experience heaven, we have to come in contact with the presence of God. After we have done that often enough, we discover certain things. It is where our greatest treasure lies. It is where we are loved without conditions. It is where our brothers and sisters live. It is where we feel secure because of the presence of the Father. Which ultimately, sounds like a good description of home.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the new earth, "heaven", will be like? What do we know for sure about it, according to scripture?
2. What would heaven be like if God did not dwell there with us?
3. Do you think the original earth, before God withdrew from it, is a good description of what heaven will be like, minus the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
4. What made the Holy of Holies a place that was fit for Him to dwell in?
5. What makes us a fit place for Him to dwell in? How about our churches? How about our worship?
6. Did Israel benefit from the presence of God that came to dwell in David's tabernacle of praise? Do our neighbors, families, and communities benefit when He comes to inhabit our praise?
7. How much do we lose out on when we fail to recognize the divine in our midst. So many come to worship Him, having needs that He is willing to fill. So many leave untouched, never knowing that He was right there beside them. How often do you?
8. Will we be among those who sat in His presence time and time again, to whom He will say, "I never knew you?"
9. Do you dream about experiencing heaven in the future? How about right now? Why do you feel you have to wait? If Life does not really end, then eternity actually starts when you receive God's Spirit. Heaven begins when you come into His presence.
10. You have undoubtedly known or met people that you are sure spend a lot of time in the presence of God. What makes you think so? What characteristics do they possess to give this impression?
11. Have you ever taken God's Word at face value and simply praised Him, thanked Him, and worshipped Him to determine whether the scriptures are true and the presence of God will be felt thereby? Are you interested in God coming to visit with you or does the concept terrify you? He promises that if you seek Him, He will be found.