

“Heaven”

X. “What Will Our Relationships Be Like?”

Recap important points:

-There are two stages of heaven: Intermediate and Eternal Heaven (New Heaven and New Earth)

-When mankind fell, creation fell. Both are under the curse of death.

Therefore, both were redeemed through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

-Jesus’ physical resurrection is the model for our physical resurrection.

-This present Earth will not be annihilated, rather restored, resurrected, redeemed, transformed from this *prototype* to the final New Earth.

-We will rule with Jesus, under His authority, on the New Earth.

-God’s original plan had no “oops” in it. Redemption was part of His original plan, and God’s original plan will be realized (Revelation 21:1).

-When we (the Church, the Bride of Christ) are presented to him, we will be wearing our acts of service, ministry and righteousness, as our Fine Linen (Revelation 19:8).

-We will rule with Christ on the New Earth. God’s Kingdom continues to expand, and we will be given dominion over it.

-The Capital City of the New Earth, is the New Jerusalem. It is a real city, with real dimensions and features.

-We will maintain our uniqueness in heaven. We will be human, and a perfect (not infinite, but perfect) version of ourselves now.

In part 10 we will focus on answering “What will our relationships be like?” by addressing 5 main questions:

- 1. Will we desire relationships with anyone except God?**
- 2. Will there be marriage, families and friendships?**
- 3. Who will we meet and what will we experience together?**
- 4. How will we relate to each other?**
- 5. What will society be like on the New Earth?**

In understanding relationships in heaven, we must keep this in mind: of all that God created and pronounced “good,” there is one thing He pronounced, “not good.” In **Genesis 2:18** God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” God created relationships, and created us to desire and enjoy not only a relationship with Him, but other *human* relationships.

Will we desire relationships with anyone except God?

Some would argue that all we need in heaven is a relationship with God. Because He is our all-sufficient God, we will have no need for human relationships. This is not what Scripture teaches.

Jesus instructed us to store up treasures in heaven. A reading of **Matthew 6:19-21** makes it clear that Jesus is referring to relationships. As we exalt and enjoy Jesus on the New Earth, we will enjoy the companionship of others. When we enjoy our relationships on this earth, it brings joy and honor to God. When we love and are loved, it brings joy to our Heavenly Father. Jesus affirmed human relationships in **Matthew 22:37-39** when He said the greatest commandment was to love God and love people. He understood that one flows from the other. Our love for people is only possible because of our love for God. (**I John 4:7-8** instructs to love one another because of our love for God and because God is love!) If we remember that we LOSE NOTHING AND GAIN EVERYTHING, then why would we lose human relationships in heaven?

Part of our humanity, and even relationships, is memory. Some think that our mind will be erased once we are in Heaven. After all **Isaiah 65:17** says that the “former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” This verse is linked to the previous verse in which God declares that “...past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.” This doesn’t suggest literal lack of memory on God’s part, as if He quits being all-knowing. Rather, it’s like God’s comment to Jeremiah, “I...will remember their sins no more” (**Jeremiah 31:34**). God *chooses* not to bring up our past sins or hold them against us. In eternity, on the New Earth, we will be capable of choosing not to recall or dwell on anything that would diminish Heaven’s joy.

God will wipe away our tears and sorrow attached to this world, but He will not erase from our minds human history and the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Remember, the resurrected Jesus still bears the marks of His crucifixion (**John 20:24-29**). As we behold those precious marks, we will remember and appreciate our redemption even more fully!

Will there be Marriage, Families, and Friendships?

Here’s the biggie! Many Christians are concerned whether or not we will be married in heaven. It’s such a big question for some that it overshadows everything else we’ve learned about Heaven so far. Before we proceed, take a few moments and reflect on all we’ve covered. And most of all don’t forget: IN HEAVEN WE LOSE NOTHING AND GAIN EVERYTHING!

Let me address FAMILY first.

Receiving a glorified body and relocating to a New Earth does not erase history, it culminates history. Nothing will do away with the fact that we were members of

families on this earth. In Heaven, we will be one big family in which all family members are friends and all friends are family members. We will have family relationships with people who were our blood family on this earth, but we will also have family relationships with our friends.

Many of us treasure our families. But for some, family relationships have caused much hurt and pain. In Heaven, we will all enjoy a loving family relationship with one another, the Family of God, and it will be harmonious, not hurtful.

In **Luke 8:19-21**, Jesus said that those who hear God's word and put it into practice are His family. In **Mark 10:29-30**, Jesus promised that those who follow Him will gain "brothers, sisters, mothers, children..."

If you've ever had a longing for a family relationship that failed you on this earth, God will meet that need in Heaven. It's not true that there will be no family in heaven. On the contrary, we will be one great family, and none of us will be left out!

**So what about marriage?*

The Sadducees (a group of religious leaders) tried to trick Jesus with a question about marriage in Heaven. They didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, so in an effort to prove their point, they pose a scenario to Jesus about a woman who had several husbands who all died (**Matthew 22:28-30**). Then they asked Jesus, whose wife will she be in heaven? Jesus answered, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage..."

The Bible is clear there will be no marriage between humans in Heaven, but it does speak of a marriage that will occur: the marriage between Jesus and the Church. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:31-32**, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church."

The one-flesh marital union we know on Earth is a signpost pointing to our relationship with Jesus as our Bridegroom. Once we reach the destination, the signpost becomes unnecessary. Our marriage to Jesus will be so completely satisfying that even the most wonderful earthly marriage couldn't be as fulfilling. Earthly marriage is a shadow, a copy, an echo of the true marriage between Christ and the Church.

Drake Whitchurch writes, "The purpose of marriage is not to replace Heaven, but to prepare us for it." Here on earth we long for a perfect marriage. As much as we may try, we fail. Our sin nature, our flesh, gets in the way. But in Heaven, Jesus will meet every need we have longed to have met here on earth, and far exceed our expectations.

I must digress for a moment and remind us all: THIS IS THE REASON MARRIAGE IS SACRED, AND SHOULD BE HONORED BY ALL (Hebrews 13:4)! This is why God commanded us to not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14). If you

dishonor marriage on earth (living together, cheating, adultery, spousal abuse, etc.) then you are not preparing for the marriage in Heaven.

Jesus said the institution of human marriage would end at the resurrection, but He never hinted that deep relationships between married people would end. Remember, in Heaven, we lose nothing but gain everything! Imagine the closeness, the intimacy, the partnership, the friend, that you desire in a spouse. Now imagine Jesus meeting those needs and superseding your expectations! That will be the marriage we enjoy in heaven. And we will not lose our relationships with our loved ones. Our love will only grow and become perfect. We will meld our *eros* and our *philos* into *agape*!

**What about sex? If there's no marriage, that means there's no sex?!*

It would seem that if there is no human marriage, there are no sexual relationships either. At first glance, one could suppose that this is an exception to the principle of continuity (things in this life being carried over to the New Earth). But a closer look reveals that there is a different sort of continuity between earthly marriage and the marriage of Christ to His Church. It would seem then that the pleasure and intimacy we know as sex will also be fulfilled in some higher form. We know that God created sex, and that it is not a result of the Fall. God called sex, and all that He created "good." So I don't expect God to discard sex without replacing it with something much better. Rather than viewing marriage and sex as bad things to be replaced by good things, we should view them as good things somehow transformed or resurrected into better ones.

Think about your own body. As healthy and fit as you may be, or as youthful as you may be, or as nice and sweet as you may be, at the resurrection, you will receive a perfect version of YOU. If YOU are going to be restored, transformed, resurrected into a much better version of YOU, then why couldn't God transform sex into something even greater in heaven?

Who Will We Meet, and What Will We Experience Together?

Have you ever thought that when you get to heaven, you will get to meet "heroes" from the Bible? Have you ever imagined talking with Abraham, Moses, Paul, Mary, Lazarus, King David, or Sampson? Do you suppose in Heaven you will be reconnected with your loved ones who were Christ-followers?

If you've answered yes, then you are CORRECT!

Jesus told us we'll sit at the dinner table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Matthew 8:11**). If we will sit with these men, we should expect we'll sit with others! And imagine what a dinner party that will be! This will be a time of talking, sharing ideas, learning, reminiscing, laughing, eating, relaxing, and building *relationships*. And

if we remember from the last couple of weeks that we will not be infinite creatures, we will be finite, then we can imagine that we will engage in discussion where ideas are shared and “debated” but without the influence of sin and selfishness.

*Take a few moments, and write down some names of people you can’t wait to see in Heaven:

Now, be comforted that all we’ve been studying is in preparation for this incredible reunion! Not only will we be reunited with loved ones, but we’ll have an eternity to pursue new relationships. Imagine getting to meet your “favorite” Christian author, a preacher/pastor you admire and respect, a Bible Study author whose material you’ve studied, a Christian sports figure you’ve admired but never met, or the missionaries you’ve helped support. Heaven will be a great reunion and a great meeting of Christ-followers!

Keeping in mind the importance of relationships in Heaven, let’s go back for a moment to something we studied in the first few weeks: there is an intermediate heaven and an eternal heaven. One more blessing of the New Heaven, the New Earth, is the fact that **we will experience all the blessings of the New Earth together!**

If you’ve ever missed an experience that other family and friends experienced together, you know the feeling of “missing out” as they are reminiscing. In Heaven, none of us will be “left out”. We will all experience this wonderful blessing together!

**If our loved ones are in Hell, won’t that spoil Heaven?*

In short, no. Hell will have no power over Heaven and none of Hell’s misery will ever veto Heaven’s joy. Still, this is a difficult question to wrap our minds around. That’s why God gave us His Word: to comfort us.

Scripture tells us in **2 Corinthians 1:3** that God is “the Father of compassion (Gk: *oiktirmos* – to exercise pity or mercy; different than *compassion* in **Matthew 9:36** when Jesus saw the crowds of people and had *compassion* on them. Here, the Gk: *splagchnizomai* – compassion – to feel or yearn in the bowels) and the God of all comfort.” The Apostle Paul is saying that God is the Father of all mercies and because of this, takes action, and exercises pity. Thus, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (**John 3:16**).

Do you believe this?

I **John 4:8** tells us that “God is love.” Notice, God *is* love. This verse doesn’t say God can love, does love, etc. It says God *IS* love. He is the very essence of love and love is the very essence of God.

Do you believe this?

Heaven is about *gaining* and not *losing*.

Do you believe this?

If you believe that God exercises mercy (**2 Corinthians 1:3**) that He is love (**1 John 4:8**) and that heaven is about gaining and not losing (**Philippians 1:21**), then you will be able to accept by the faith the Biblical truth that we'll never question God's justice, wondering how "good" people could be in Hell. We will marvel at His grace that allows "bad" people to go to Heaven. Jonathan Edwards made this case, saying, "When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it." They shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned."

Because God is love, and the author of love, *and* because we are only able to love because of God, *and* with the understanding that in Hell there is no God, therefore there is no love, then essentially our loved ones *won't* be in Hell – only some whom we *once* loved. In other words, our love for our companions, our capacity to love and to be loved, is directly linked to God, the giver and enabler of love. What we loved in those who died without Christ was God's beauty we once saw in them. When God forever withdraws from them, they will no longer bear His image and no longer reflect His beauty. Although they will be the same people, they will be stripped of all the qualities we loved. Paradoxically, they will *not* be the people we loved.

Everyone deserves Hell (**Romans 6:23**). No one deserves Heaven (**Ephesians 2:8**). Jesus went to the cross to offer salvation (**1 John 2:2**). God is absolutely sovereign and doesn't desire anyone to go into eternity without Him (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**; **2 Peter 3:9**). Given this, as Christ-followers, we will embrace God's holiness and justice. We'll praise Him for His goodness. God will be our source for joy. In Heaven, we will see with a new and far better perspective. **Revelation 21:4** assures us that Jesus will wipe away our tears of sorrow and that we will have no pain. Anything sorrow or pain resulting from those whom we loved on earth rejecting Jesus, will be wiped away and we will be free to enjoy God's promised blessings that accompany Heaven.

How Will We Relate to Each Other?

We must remember that we were created for relationships: first with God, then with each other. We are created in the image of God, and He Himself is a plurality (**Genesis 1:26**). Father, Son and Spirit delight in each other's companionship (**Luke 10:21**). Therefore, we were created to delight in each other's company. This God-given desire for relationships will not cease in the afterlife.

We will enjoy relationships with one another without the selfishness of sin. We will have no ill-intent, no ulterior motives. Again, we will be *free* to love God and each other! We will be equal in worth, but will maintain our uniqueness and diversity in giftedness and rewards for righteous actions done on earth.

*As we venture into eternity enjoying the wonders of Heaven, together with our loved ones, we can also look forward to *ownership* of possessions in Heaven. God owns it all, but in Heaven, we are *joint-heirs* with Jesus, and will receive rewards, dwelling places, new relationships, and an eternity to cultivate those relationships. We will have the opportunity to “pick-up” our relationships where we “left off” on earth. The opportunities missed because of an untimely death of a family member or friend will be more than compensated in Heaven.

What Will Society be Like on the New Earth?

We’ve already learned that life on the New Earth is a carry-over from life on this earth and will be restored, resurrected and without the influence of sin and evil. We’ve established that there will be cultural and national diversity (**Revelation 21:24-26**). Our resurrected DNA will be unflawed, but it will preserve our God-given uniqueness. There will be no racism, for we will truly realize the image of God as we see His crowning creation come together as the Bride.

Interestingly, before man began building the Tower of Babel, everyone spoke one universal language (**Genesis 11:1**). God confused their language to stop their plans for building a city and a tower for their own glory. He also dispersed the people (**Genesis 11:4,6**). In reversing the Curse, God will reverse the sin at Babel. Instead of people building a city for their glory, God will build a city for them, for His glory. In **Genesis 11**, people attempted to connect Earth to Heaven with their city, making Heaven one with the Earth. In **Revelation 21**, God will bring Heaven down to Earth, in His city, making Earth one with Heaven. It seems then, that with the absence of sin and selfish ambition, God will restore one universal language. However, this doesn’t mean our common language we have on Earth will be lost. I see that it will be *in addition to* Heaven’s universal language. **Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 21:24-26** suggests that tribes (families or clans), peoples (race), and nations (those who share a national identity and culture) will make their own contribution to the enrichment of life in the New Jerusalem.

*As previously discussed, because we maintain our uniqueness and diversity, we have every reason to believe every culture and time period will be represented in Heaven. If we see God’s Kingdom as one that continually progresses, then we have every reason to believe that ancient cultures will continue to do so in Heaven. Sin did not stop the ingenuity and progress of God’s crowning, image-bearing creation.

Redemption and resurrection simply relocates all of man's achievements from this sin corrupted earth, to a New Heaven and a New Earth, where we will be free from sin and evil. Our motives will be pure and our desire will be for God to be glorified in our work, play, rest, relaxation, relationships and all that we accomplish!