



## 26. Sharing the Joys of Heaven Even Now

The Lord inspired the apostle John to devote two entire chapters to descriptions of what heaven will be like-- Revelation 21 and 22. Both are a joy to read.

But many have a wrong idea of heaven. They are right that its delights will be wonderful beyond one's rosiest imagination, and it will be a more wonderful place than the best vacation resort you can possibly think of. But there is something many forget. Maybe we can illustrate.

If you were offered an all-expenses-paid, permanent vacation in your choice of the world's luxurious vacation resorts, could you enjoy it alone, without your closest loved one or friend? If you will think about your answer, you will soon realize that even in Hawaii, Switzerland, the South Seas, anywhere, you would soon be miserable even in the most marvelous surroundings if you were alone. And you would be especially unhappy there if your conscience hurt you. You couldn't enjoy the climate, the beaches, the mountains, the food, or the hotels. Physical delights do not make heaven!

What makes Heaven heaven is being with Jesus, one with Him. When you are supremely happy, your physical surroundings are not all that important. (Materialistic parents seldom understand why teenagers who have enjoyed every modern luxury at home still run away sometimes.)

Overflowing happiness is what heaven is made of. And the good news is that when we understand this, heaven actually begins here and now. You can start tasting the joys of heaven as you show the love of Christ to someone else. And like a parent enjoys his child forever, you will enjoy fellowship with those people whom you have won to Christ, not only for the rest of your life here, but in the ceaseless ages of eternity.

### What's Most Important About Heaven

1. What makes Heaven to be heaven indeed? Read John 14:3, last part; Revelation 7:17.

YOUR ANSWER: "God shall \_\_\_\_\_ all tears from their eyes."

Heaven without Christ wouldn't be heaven. Suppose that you could knock at the gate of heaven and an angel voice said, "Come in. You're welcome. All the wonderful things you've always dreamed of are there. But not Jesus. He's in a hospital comforting the sick, or on the battlefield ministering to a wounded soldier, or taking food to the hungry, or comforting a discouraged teenager, or hanging on a cross; He's not there. "Would you go in?"

2. Many popular churches believe that the "saved" go straight to heaven when they die, and there they enjoy paradise while the rest of us here below have to carry on the battle with Satan.

(a) Could someone who knows the love of Christ be happy with such a reward?

(b) Wouldn't he prefer to stay on the battlefield until the war is won?

YOUR ANSWER: (a) \_\_\_\_\_; (b) \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Although the new earth is not yet, when do the joys of heaven really begin? John 15:11; 1 John 5:11, 12.

ANSWER: "God \_\_\_\_\_ unto us eternal life, and this life is in his \_\_\_\_\_. He that hath the Son \_\_\_\_\_."

4. What shows that the popular idea that the saved go to heaven as soon as they die is not true according to the Bible? Where is David still? Acts 2:29, 34; John 5:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

ANSWER: "David is both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and his sepulchre is \_\_\_\_\_ unto this day. For David is \_\_\_\_\_ into the heavens."

What must take place before the dead can become immortal?

YOUR ANSWER: The \_\_\_\_\_.

The New Testament idea of love (agape) is based on the resurrection of the dead. The counterfeit idea of love is based on the unbiblical idea of the natural immortality of the soul. Unless the Lord converts us from our natural self-centered ways, we could never be happy in heaven. The true Christian will enjoy bearing the cross with Christ more than any amount of so-called fun without Him. In other words, as long as there are sick and suffering people whom Jesus wants to help, we would be happier working with Him to help them than we would be in heaven, just enjoying ourselves.

5. According to the Bible, what do the saved do from the time they die until the resurrection from the dead? Daniel 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 16.

ANSWER: "Many that \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ shall awake, ..." "For the \_\_\_\_\_ shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ first."

During this time that they sleep, they know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

They are like tired soldiers who take a nap (Revelation 14:13, 14). In the meantime those who are left are fighting on Jesus' side in finishing the war with Satan (see Revelation 17:14).

6. Aside from meeting Jesus, what will be the greatest pleasure you will have after you are resurrected (or translated) when Jesus comes? Daniel 12:2, 3. Compare Proverbs 11:30.

ANSWER: Those who have won souls will "shine as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_; and they that \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ as the stars for ever and ever."

Your greatest joy in heaven will not be eating delicious fruit, gazing on gorgeous scenery, or even listening to beautiful music. It will be meeting people who will be there as the result of what you did and said to invite them to be there! Then your face will shine like the sun.

## The Story of the New Heaven and the New Earth

7. What shows that the eternal home of the saved will not be an unreal cloud out in space? Matthew 5:5; Revelation 21:1.

ANSWER: "The meek ... shall \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_." "And I saw a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_: ... and there was no more sea."

8. Why will there be a new heaven as well as a new earth? Revelation 21:3.

ANSWER: God will move His tabernacle (or throne) to be " \_\_\_\_\_," and He will " \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_."

9. What will "dwell" in this new heaven and new earth? 2 Peter 3:10, 13 (notice last part).

ANSWER: "We ... look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth \_\_\_\_\_." (compare 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). "Righteousness" means right-doing--love and true obedience to God's commandments.

"The redeemed will be welcomed to the home that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth, liars, idolaters, the impure, and unbelieving; but they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and through divine grace have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection that afflicts them here has been removed by the blood of Christ, and the excellence and brightness of His glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, is imparted to them. And the moral beauty, the perfection of His character, shines through them, in worth far exceeding this outward splendor. They are without fault before the great white throne, sharing the dignity and the privileges of the angels.

"In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, 'what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Matthew 16:26. He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth;

and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph." Happiness Digest, p. 61.

10. Will there be animals there? Isaiah 11:6-9.

YOUR ANSWER: \_\_\_\_\_.

Who will play with them?

ANSWER: "A \_\_\_\_\_ shall lead them."

11. What are some of the things God's people will do in the new earth? Isaiah 65:17, 21-23, 25.

ANSWER: "They shall \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_; and they shall \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of them."

12. What city will be the beautiful capital of God's new earth? Revelation 21:2 (read on for as many verses as you have time for).

ANSWER: "The New \_\_\_\_\_."

13. What special food will be provided to ensure that death will never come again? Revelation 22:1-3 (as you have time, read further in this chapter).

ANSWER: The fruit from the "\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_."

14. When will all of God's people gather together regularly for fellowship together? Isaiah 66:22, 23.

ANSWER: "From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, shall \_\_\_\_\_ come to \_\_\_\_\_ before me, saith the \_\_\_\_\_."

The redeemed will become one grand Sabbath School, and the glories of redemption in Christ will be our lesson. Sabbath School here and now is a foretaste of the joy of that one yet to come. Obviously, the "new moon" or monthly trip to the capitol city, New Jerusalem, will be to partake of the monthly fruit of the tree of life.

15. The Lamb is a symbol of Christ as the Crucified One. When He is called by this name, it means we remember that He died for us. Count in your Bible and mark the times that "the Lamb" is mentioned in Revelation 21 and 22, and notice the emphasis. What will always remind us of Jesus' cross?

YOUR ANSWER: \_\_\_\_\_.

One reminder alone remains: our Redeemer will forever bear the marks of His crucifixion. The sight of His wounded hands, His feet, His side, will keep ever fresh the memory of what it cost Him to save us. But sin and sinners will be no more--for ever and ever.

16. Are you as concerned about getting ready for heaven, as merely getting there? \_\_\_\_\_.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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