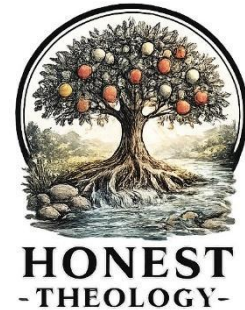


Two Questions About “Heaven”

Part 5 of my “Searching for Heaven” Series

I got asked two questions the other day. I was told to answer using no Scripture, no heavy-duty terms, just my simple, personal answer as best as I could. Oh, and try to stay within just two sentences. Given my extensive researching into “heaven,” (I’m spending hours each day) it should have been easy. *It wasn’t*. I only got as far as #1. Here are the questions:



1. What do you believe Scripture says God’s ultimate purpose for creation is?
2. How should that understanding affect your Christian hope and actions now?

First, you should notice that nowhere is “heaven” even mentioned. That’s because when you really get down to the nitty-gritty of life after death, most of a person’s eternal destiny is wrapped up within a person’s human existence. Whether you’re Christian or Muslim, Hindu or Jewish those religions spend a lot of time talking about what you *should* and *shouldn’t* be doing while you are alive. Can we really talk about “heaven” without talking about ... earth ... here ... now?

Right?

How you answer that first question with either a religious faith or not sets the entire tone for how you perceive “hope” and what you understand “actions” to mean. How we live is what we believe. Is your life motto, “She who dies with the most toys wins”? Or perhaps, “You only live once”? What about, “Don’t let the entire purpose of your life serve as a warning to others”? And, of course, there is, “What would Jesus do?”

These two questions that don’t even mention “heaven” and *your answers* shape everything you have chosen to believe about life after death. Many, many individuals answer both of these questions with, “I don’t know.” Actually, “I don’t know” isn’t such a bad answer; it leaves an individual open to possibilities.

This “I don’t know” is where I find myself regularly. I view my “I don’t know” as God’s invitation to explore. Scripture tells us that God welcomes those inquiries. “Call to me, and I will answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” (That’s from [Jeremiah 33:3](#).) And Jesus promised, “.. the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you” ([John 14:26](#)). These verses have excited me my entire life because those promises are *current and available today*.

Focusing on just the first question, my personal study has brought me to the point where I believe Scripture continually shows that God’s purpose has always been to dwell *in* creation. Each time in history (the Garden, the Tabernacle/Temple, Jesus present as *Immanuel, God with us*, the Spirit present in believers today...) has invited humanity’s obedient participation and cooperation ... always with very mixed results.

Why did God bother?

Why would God create something that was so wonderful even God thought it was [“very good,”](#) and consistently make earnest attempts to be present in this wonderful place? Why would God’s image-bearing creature (humans – in God’s [“own image”](#) no less) be tasked specifically to [“till and keep”](#) this wonderful place?

The answer to this “why” question is where humanity’s life after death destiny comes in. Because if “heaven” is indeed a place far away from this wonderful place, do we really need to keep in good shape? (You might argue – and rightly so – that we are doing a pretty awful job of it thus far...) If “heaven” is this far away from this wonderful created place, then those that believe in God, expect God to be there, right? Does that mean that God’s ultimate purpose has always been to dwell *away* from creation in another – more wonderful place – than this wonderful place we’ve already experienced? And, if that’s true, why does God keep demonstrating God’s desire to “hang out down here” with us in creation?

These are questions that, if you can’t answer satisfactorily to yourself, you should at least acknowledge and think and pray about. And search Scripture...our best resource. And work to understand the history behind humanity’s beginning, through God’s actions with God’s chosen people, through God’s actions demonstrated throughout the Gospel... Humanity has come a loooong way from being just a [single chosen individual](#) (Abram). At his call, Abram wasn’t a good Jew, Muslim, or Christian. He was “just” a man who *obediently responded* to God’s invitation. (By the way, humanity is still learning about God, in case you were wondering...)

I think we need to keep asking this first question. We don’t want to misunderstand what God intends for creation ... including us, do we?

I’m still working on Question #2. I’ll get back to you.

Scripture To Maybe Check Out:

(Some Scripture that shows God’s desire to dwell in creation.)

- [Genesis 3:8](#) – God “walking in the garden”
- [Exodus 25:8](#) – God’s sanctuary to be built so that God can “dwell among them”
- [John 1:14](#) – The “Word became flesh and lived among us...”
- [Ezekiel 37:27](#) – “My dwelling place shall be over them...”
- [Revelation 21:3](#) – “...the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them...”

Bibliography notes:

1. For the majority of my ‘Heaven’ posts, I will be using the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Feel free to research your own translation or look up the many translations that are available on [Bible Gateway](#).

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