

The 2nd Sunday after Epiphany ~ Sunday, January 14, 2024

“Heaven: The Two Realities of Heaven”

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

INTRODUCTION

As believers, we need to let the _____ determine our convictions about this important subject, rather than best-selling books detailing near death experiences, Hollywood fantasies, personal opinion, or neuro/scientific guesswork.

“If then you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

In the world’s opinion, the concept of heaven is an absurdity that weak Christians hold to as a form of _____; a way to help them endure the misery of this life by clinging naively to the illusion of bliss in an imaginary afterlife.

Sadly, this perception isn’t helped by the fact that a lot of Christian talk about heaven can be sentimental, silly, and sensational, and not very _____ at all, making it unable to stand up to the _____ of the world.

What’s even worse is our poor _____ of heaven can fail to grip our own hearts, so that we don’t particularly care to go there, nor does it move us to set our minds on things above. However, as Paul says in that passage from Colossians, heavenly-mindedness is a vital spiritual _____, without which it’s impossible to live the Christian life well.

Paul looks forward to the day when his body is going to be raised to newness of life in the _____ at the end of the age.

Tent = our physical bodies are just a _____ accommodation.

“For we know that if this tent that is our earthly home is destroyed we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.” (2 Corinthians 5:1-2)

Paul is looking far away down the long ages of human history, stretching out ahead of him toward the moment when the heavens split with glory, the trumpet sounds, Christ returns, and the dead are _____.

This is what Christian _____ is all about. It’s not ultimately fixed on what happens immediately after death, but rather on the coming new _____, of a

glorious resurrection, of the permanent and imperishable reunion of a perfected body with a sinless soul that will reflect fully the mirror image of the exalted _____ Himself.

“Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

Paul also says that he knows there’s a condition or a state of being _____ his death and that final day.

Being found naked and of being unclothed = which refers to the existence of his _____ without his body.

Although Paul is longing for the _____ reality of heaven on the day of resurrection, he also speaks of another reality of heaven here.

“We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith and not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:6)

When we die as a believer in Christ, the heaven to which we _____ go—that first reality—involves what Paul calls being “unclothed,” a less than the _____ state. Although there’s something better for which we’ll still have to wait—the new heaven and new earth—that doesn’t mean that going to heaven at the time of death isn’t something to look forward to as well

3 IMPLICATIONS OF PAUL’S TEACHING

Implication #1: _____.

The _____ human body of the exalted Christ, the same body in which He was crucified, and in which He rose again from the dead on the third day, is there right now, locally present in _____.

This means, among other things, heaven is a _____ place. After all, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity still has a human body. A glorified, exalted body, to be sure, but it remains a thing of dimensionality, _____, and sensory perception. His deity as divine Son, fills the _____, but His humanity is not everywhere at once. It has the properties of a _____ and it exists as all creatures must—in one particular place in the created realm in heavenly glory.

“In the beginning, *God created the heavens* and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

3 CONNOTATIONS OF HEAVEN IN THE BIBLE

• It refers to the: _____.

“The rain and the snow come down from heaven.” (Isaiah 55:10)

• It refers to the: _____.

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

• It refers to the: _____.

“Christ has entered heaven itself.” (Hebrews 9:24)

“...look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation.” (Isaiah 63:15)

God isn't _____ to heaven. And yet, He has especially ordained to make His _____ shine there. And that glory shines brightest now in the _____ of the exalted humanity of Jesus Christ

“Behold heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain You.” (1 Kings 8:26)

Implication #2: _____.

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)

And in Philippians 1:23, he says he wants to _____ to be with Christ, which is far _____ because he'd rather be absent from the body and at home with the Lord

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?’” (Rev 6:9-10)

Under the altar = their _____ under the sacrificial, atoning _____ of the Lamb of God.

We're all under the blood of Jesus. In fact, there's no _____ anywhere else. Jesus died for us and we're together under His altar, recipients forever of His self-giving _____ at Calvary, both here and now, and far more fully and wonderfully in the here after when we go to heaven.

The believers under the altar are _____ and calling out to God for justice, ruling out any notion of what some people call “_____ sleep”—the idea that when Christians die, they're sleeping, unconscious of the passage of time, only to awaken together at the resurrection on the last day.

White robes = entering into _____ and they're told to rest. There's relief and release, and heaven is a place of purity and _____ because Jesus is there and sin is not. No _____, no soul sleep; just the bliss of being with Jesus, which is far better

Implication #3: _____.

Being with Christ is better than our highest _____ in this life. Being with Christ is sweeter than our happiest moment or our deepest _____ in this life. Being with Christ is more precious than all our earthly _____. Being with Christ is more thrilling than the end of _____ at last, the cessation of sorrow at last, or even the undoing of death. Being With Christ is more wonderful than taking our place in that great congregation of the redeemed which no one can number, from every tribe, language, race, and nation, to sing praises to God. Being with Christ will be all glory—a glory that _____ every other glory.

CONCLUSION

“...there will be no need of sun or moon there, for the glory of God will give it light and the Lamb will be its lamp.” (Revelation 21:23)

Jesus' brightness will _____ every inch of heaven. His _____ will fill our gaze no matter what direction we look. Jesus' light makes heaven, heavenly. His glory makes heaven glorious. His beauty makes it all beautiful.

“Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.” (Psalm 73:23)

He knows that by the grace of God, whatever trials he passes through in this life, _____ lies ahead.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (Psalm 73:25-26)

If the Lamb is the _____ of heaven and the light of heaven, if death is _____, if being with Christ is far _____, how can we expect to obtain the blessedness that's promised in the future when we die, if we don't _____ and love Jesus as the pearl of great price here and now?

Every time we share at the Lord's Table, we're practising the discipline of _____—we're seeking to commune with Him who reigns at the right hand of God—rejoicing that we are one with Him, one with each other, and one with all those who have gone before us.