

What is Heaven Like?

We love beginnings, but what about endings? Some endings, like the end of life or the end of the world, can even feel scary. But we need not fear; we just have to be prepared. Let's talk about how to live now in light of what's to come.



INTRODUCTION

Today we were reminded that heaven is a real and indescribably glorious place God has prepared for us to be in His presence forever after this life on earth is done. We can find hope and perhaps more peace in our current chaos by talking about the hope of heaven.

STARTER QUESTION

What images pop through you mind when you think of heaven? What do you look forward to the most about going to heaven?

INTO THE WORD

- 1) Is your image of heaven still limited to angels with harps on clouds? How was the way you think about heaven expanded today? Read Revelation 7:9, Ephesians 2:6-7, John 14:2, Revelation 22:3, and Luke 6:21. Discuss the five things Pastor David described would be in heaven, including: Relationships and community; learning and discovery; fascinating opportunities to explore; productivity and accomplishments; and joy and laughter.
- 2) Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Discuss reactions to the dramatic contrasts to the descriptions of life experiences here on earth compared to what we can expect to experience in heaven.
- 3) Read Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. How do these two verses back up each other? Do they have any other purpose than to inject us with hope?
- 4) Read Jeremiah 29:11. How does this passage about the future that God has for you mirror the verses discussed in the sermon today?

APPLICATION

- 5) We tend not to talk about heaven very much. Why do you think that is? Can you think of anyone who needs to hear today's message and how it might help them? How can we incorporate more talk about heaven in our everyday lives?
- 6) How does knowing what is in store for us in Heaven help us to cope with the struggles we face in today's world?

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for the blessed hope we have in knowing heaven is a real place and we will be there together with you someday. Thank you that we are not without hope in this world and you are causing everything to work together for our good here on earth. Amen

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Question 1:

Discuss and consider in depth how heaven will include:

Relationships and community, “...*behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne...*” — *Revelation 7:9*;

Learning and discovery, “*Christ...raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” — *Ephesians 2:6-7*;

Fascinating opportunities to explore, “*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*” — *John 14:2*;

Productivity and accomplishment, “*No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.*” — *Revelation 22:3*;

Joy and laughter, “*Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*” — *Luke 6:21*

Question 2:

Dramatic contrasts in verses 7-12: hard pressed...not crushed; persecuted...not abandoned; struck down...not destroyed; death of Jesus...life of Jesus; given over to death...life revealed in our mortal body; death is at work...life is at work.

In verses 13-18 invite each person to explain how one or more of these ideas rekindles hope in their life now.

Question 3:

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
—*Romans 15:4*

In *Romans 15:4* we can see that God gives us instructions for these days of tribulations or difficulties. The first two passages not only back up each other, we can say that they mean practically the same.

Points to consider in these two verses:

1. The affliction or suffering is momentary
2. The eternal weight of glory we will experience in heaven is beyond all comparison
3. There are things that God has not revealed to us yet

We can learn from these two verses that God not only wants us to have hope from these verses but to know that there are things that are going to be revealed to us when the right time comes. We can not only feel hope from these verses, but also these verses create expectation and curiosity.

Question 4:

In this verse God is revealing that He has plans that He knows...plans for the welfare of His people. Also, He says in this verse that those plans have the purpose of giving us hope and a future. As we can see in this verse, it is part of God's plan to give us hope with His promise of a greater future.