A STUDY OF HEAVEN

PART 5

Will We Want Anyone Besides Christ?

Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last" (Revelation 22:13).

Genesis/The Garden

"It is not good for the man to be alone" I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18).

Jesus Christ

Jesus affirmed that the greatest commandment was to love God, but that the second, inseparable from the first, was to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39).

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders because they imagined they could love God without loving people (Luke 10:27-37).

Apostle Paul

Paul says to his friends in Thessalonica, "We loved you so much" and "You had become so dear to us," then speaks of his "intense longing" to be with them (1 Thessalonians 2:8, 17).

"What is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).

"How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?" (1 Thessalonians 3: 9).

"You long to see us, just as we also long to see you...Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again" (1 Thessalonians 3:6, 9-10).

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope...God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him...We who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them...And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 17-18).

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:3-6)

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:7-8)

Randy Alcorn

"Christ is Heaven's center of gravity, but we don't diminish his importance by enjoying natural wonders, angels, or people. On the contrary, we'll exalt him and draw closer to him as we enjoy all he created."

Jonathan Edwards

"Every Christian friend that goes before us from this world is a ansomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above. There the Christian father, and mother, and wife, and child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end. There we shall have companionship with the patriarchs and fathers and saints of the Old and New Testaments, and those of whom the world was not worthy. . . And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier, and Guide, and Comforter; and shall be filled with all the fullness of the Godhead forever!"

Will We Remember Our Time on Earth?

Isaiah Out of Context

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." (Isaiah 65:17)

"For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes."

The Martyrs

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (Revelation 6:9-11).

"If we had no memory of the bad things, why would we need comfort? How would we feel it? Our minds will be clearer in Heaven, not foggier. Memory is basic to personality. Heaven cleanses our slate of sin and error, but it doesn't erase our memory of it. The lessons we learned here about God's love, grace, and justice surely aren't lost but will carry over to Heaven" (Randy Alcorn).

Will We Recognize Each Other in Heaven?

Christ's Disciples

Christ's disciples recognized him countless times after his resurrection.

- They recognized him on the shore as he cooked breakfast for them (John 21:1-14).
- They recognized him when he appeared to a skeptical Thomas (John 20:24-29).
- They recognized him when he appeared to five hundred people at once (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Mary

"Woman . . . why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him" (John 20:15).

"She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher)" (John 20:16).

Disciples on Road to Emmaus

"As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him" (Luke 24:15-16).

"Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight" (Luke 24:31).

J.C. Ryle

"There would be no point in these words of consolation if they did not imply the mutual recognition of saints. The hope with which he cheers wearied Christians is the hope of meeting their beloved friends again. . . . But in the moment that we who are saved shall meet our several friends in heaven, we shall at once know them, and they will at once know us" (J.C. Ryle).

Will We Still Have Families in Heaven?

Jesus Christ

"My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice" (Luke 8:19-21).

Will There Be Marriages in Heaven?

Jesus Christ

They asked him, "Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" (Matthew 22:28). Christ replied, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

Apostle Paul

"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" (Ephesians 5:31-32).

Randy Alcorn

"The purpose of marriage is not to replace Heaven, but to prepare us for it."

Will We Have Sex in Heaven?

C.S. Lewis

"I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer 'No,' he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate: he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it" (C.S. Lewis).

Will We Be Reunited With Infants Who Have Died?

Charles Spurgeon

"Some ground the idea of the eternal blessedness of the infant upon its innocence. We do no such thing. We believe that the infant fell in the first Adam 'for in Adam all died.' . . . If infants be saved it is not because of any natural innocence. They enter heaven by the very same way that we do: they are received in the name of Christ."

Jesus Christ

- Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them" (Luke 18:16).
- Christ used children as examples of faith (Matthew 18:2-4).
- Jesus says that the angels assigned to children "continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).
- In Ezekiel 16: 21, God expresses his anger at the killing of children and refers to them as "my children."

King David

"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise" (Psalm 8:2 quoted by Jesus in Matthew 21:16).

David says God had been his God since his mother bore him (Psalm 22:10).

David's statement about his infant son who died: "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23).

If children do go to Heaven when they die, why doesn't God tell us that directly?

Randy Alcorn

Randy Alcorn writes, "It may be that he anticipates the twisted logic and rationalization it might foster in us. It might take from us the sense of urgency to see our children come to faith in Christ. It might cause us to be less concerned about the sacred God-given task of extending physical and financial help to the underprivileged and getting the gospel to children around the world. We must do what God has called us to do, which includes protecting, rescuing, feeding, evangelizing, and discipling children. In Heaven, both we and they will be grateful for all we did on their behalf."

Who Will Our Friends Be in Heaven?

Augustine

"We have not lost our dear ones who have departed from this life, but have merely sent them ahead of us, so we also shall depart and shall come to that life where they will be more than ever dear as they will be better known to us, and where we shall love them without fear of parting."

"All of us who enjoy God are also enjoying each other in Him" (Augustine).

Apostle Paul

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26).

Will Some Friendships Be Closer Than Others?

Jesus Christ

Just because we'll be sinless doesn't mean we won't be drawn to certain people more than others. We'll like everyone, but we'll be closer to some than others.

- Jesus was closer to John than to any of the other disciples.
- Jesus was closer to Peter, James, and John than to the rest of the Twelve, and closer to the Twelve than to the seventy, and closer to the seventy than to his other followers.
- He was close to Lazarus and Martha, and closer still to their sister Mary.
- He was so close to his mother that while he was dying on the cross, he instructed John to care for her after his death.
- Since Christ was closer to some people than to others, clearly there can't be anything wrong with it.

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

Jesus Christ

Jesus told us we'll sit at the dinner table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11).

If we sit with them, we should expect to sit with others. What do people do at dinner tables? In Middle Eastern cultures dinner was—and is—not only about good food and drink but also a time for building relationships, talking together, and telling stories.

Will We Each Be Known Intimately By God?

Isaiah and Jesus Christ

"To his servants he will give another name" (Isaiah 65:15).

"I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

C.S. Lewis

"What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently?" (C.S. Lewis)

Will Animals Inhabit the New Earth?

Isaiah

"the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

"'The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. . . . They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,' says the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25).

Do Animals Have Souls?

Genesis

"the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:25).

"Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air" (Genesis 2:19).

Will My Pets be in Heaven?

John Wesley

"Something better remains after death for these poor creatures . . . that these, likewise, shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings." John Wesley

C.S. Lewis

"It seems to me possible that certain animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters. . . . Very few animals indeed, in their wild state, attain to a 'self' or ego. But if any do, and if it is agreeable to the goodness of God that they should live again, their immortality would also be related to man—not, this time, to individual masters, but to humanity."

Randy Alcorn

"I cannot emphasize strongly enough that humans and animals are different. Humans continue to exist after death, but that may not be the case for animals. However, to do justice to Scripture, we need to recognize that people and animals share something unique: They are living beings. Because God has a future plan for both mankind and Earth, it strongly suggests that he has a future plan for animals as well."