

The Doctrine of Heaven, Pt. 1

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[0 : 0 0] And so the last three weeks we've been studying hell and kind of just establishing the Bible doctrine of hell.! Study that it's a real place and the Bible is very, very clear with an abundance of mentions, references, descriptions of the place.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ himself had much to say and to warn about the place of hell and what it's like and not to go there. And so what we studied in three weeks was the location of hell, both in the present as well as in the future.

We studied a description of hell and saw that the Bible describes it as a place of fire, a place of torment, a place of darkness, a place of imprisonment.

And then we studied the degrees of hell, meaning the Scripture seems to teach that there's various degrees or worse cases or damnation in hell.

For instance, the Bible says that a fire is kindled and burned to the lowest hell. The Bible also describes the depths, plural, of hell. And then there were some that Jesus Christ taught that they would be receiving the greater damnation.

[1 : 1 3] And other cities were going to find it more tolerable in the day of judgment than others, than even Sodom and Gomorrah, for instance. So it seems to teach that there's various degrees and it wouldn't be hard to understand even based upon our justice system today.

And beyond that, then we studied the duration of hell. We established what I believe is sound doctrine from three weeks of studying the King James Bible. And if there's more to say, we're going to move on.

There may be more to say and I don't know what it would be. But I think we established pretty clear doctrine. Now I said at the very beginning of that study that most people are okay with heaven, but they take issue with hell.

And that to have a heaven and to allow that, by necessity, it demands a hell. You don't get all the positive. It doesn't match the nature of God. It doesn't match the hand or the dealing of God.

It's not His nature. It's not His person. And so having a heaven demands a hell. We've established what the Bible teaches about hell. So now we're going to attempt, and I'll say that word literally, we're going to attempt to study heaven.

[2 : 1 8] It's not an easy study. You can pick up somebody's book about heaven, some doctrinal book on heaven. It'll give you a few things. I've looked at a handful of them, and most of them say the same things.

And in my opinion, several of them take scripture out of context or take something that's talking about something else and say that's heaven. And I had my head spinning this week pretty bad.

So I think it's a harder thing to teach than hell. And for instance, when you picture heaven, let me back up. If you picture hell in your mind, you can get a glimpse based on what we've studied.

You can get some kind of thought. And it may not be even close to what it really looks like by way of reality, but you can still gather a thought based on what we've studied. But when I say picture heaven in your mind, I imagine if you're like me, your imagination of what heaven is, if it's based on the Bible, it's still not as clear.

It's kind of foggy. It's kind of vague. It's kind of, well, I think there's this throne, but can you really picture what the throne is? And the color that describes the light emanating from it and other mentions of beings that are there in the presence of God and the heavenly host and some things Christ said he prepared for them that love him.

[3 : 37] And you get some thought, but I have a feeling that if you're like me, that trying to base what you know about heaven on the Bible gets a little bit tricky. I don't believe the Bible is as specific or informative about the details of heaven as a place as it is about hell.

And my take on that is probably because such knowledge would be too wonderful for you and I. I hath not seen, nor heard, nor entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

I don't know that you and I will even be able to understand and grasp what heaven is and what it's going to be in its entirety. In my opinion, it's over our heads. It's outside of the realm of our comprehension.

Even the things God does, the crumbs, if you will, that God does lay down for us to consider. Now, I want to give you a side note before we even get started. And to do this, look at Luke chapter 16.

The side note is this. Don't be fooled by the books that are written by people that supposedly died and went to heaven and then came back and found a publisher.

[4 : 44] And decided to write a book and get it published and get royalties and get money. Don't be fooled by people that claim they've been there and the sites that they've seen and then they describe it on the pages of a book.

There's many, many. Go to a bookstore. There's a lot of them. Go to a Christian bookstore. You'll find easily a dozen books of somebody that went to heaven and came back. So they say.

My opinion about them, and I don't know how to be too soft about it, I think they're idiots. I think they're completely deluded fools. And they're either greedy and liars or they're just straight deceived.

And something happened to them that was, you know, in a coma, in a whatever situation you want to call it. And what took place in their head did not take place in their soul or in their body or either one.

Now, here's what I'll show you first. Let's just consider what the Bible says about such a thing. Luke 16. And here's a case. I'll read verse 27 to 31.

[5 : 46] This is the rich man in hell having a conversation with Abraham. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, that is, send Lazarus.

For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.

They don't need another witness to warn about the afterlife of heaven or hell. He said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Their testimony will hold more weight than the Holy Scriptures, than Moses and the prophet. Abraham doesn't agree. Verse 31, he said, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The rich man wanted to send Lazarus out of Abraham's bosom, a.k.a. paradise at the time. He wanted to send him back to earth.

[6 : 51] And Abraham said, And Abraham said, No. The scriptures are sufficient. The word of God is all they're going to get. And if they won't hear that, they don't need another book. They don't need somebody else's testimony.

That's not the way God's going to allow it. So, Lazarus was not allowed to leave paradise to warn people on earth about hell. And that's the case.

Then what makes you think God would allow somebody to leave to tell about heaven? You guys should come. You really should come up here. It's so wonderful. That doesn't match the way God handles things in the scripture.

Let's take another case in the Bible. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 12. It's God allowing people to return to earth from heaven.

2 Corinthians chapter 12. And this is the Apostle Paul. And he had a time in his life where he was stoned.

[7 : 58] And it appears in Acts chapter 14 that he was put to death. They drug him out of the city and left him for death, supposing he was dead. And some folks say, well, he was just knocked out cold.

But what doesn't seem to match that is that when he comes to or revives, he stood up on his feet and he went right back into the city. Which doesn't sound like you just go right back into harm's way where they were throwing stones at you.

It looks like Paul died. And in verse number 2, I'll start in verse 1. It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago. And the timing of that backs up to Acts chapter 14. Whether in the body I cannot tell or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth.

Such in one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth. How that he was caught up into paradise. And notice this now.

[8 : 56] Heard unspeakable words which is not lawful for a man to utter. Paul was caught up to the third heaven. But when God did send him back, he said, keep your mouth shut.

You're not writing a book about this one, Paul. Isn't that interesting? And yet all these women and men, whoever they are, claim that they died and went to heaven. And God showed them all these visions of grandeur and glory.

And now they get to come back and write a book. Why is it that they all write a book? Or want to be a speaker at a church? So these are words that were unlawful. It says, he said in chapter 12, verse 1, it's not expedient for me, doubtless.

Like, I shouldn't even come into this where you talk about what you've done and who you are. Because if I did, Paul says, I'd come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Like, I've been there, folks. I've seen it with my eyes. I could describe things and I've heard things. But he said, that's off limits. I'm barred from that. So upon return, he wasn't allowed to talk about it.

[10 : 05] So my advice is don't be gullible. No matter how convincingly they seem to be or how the words of their books seem to talk just like the Bible. What they saw matches the Bible.

Go figure. That means you and I could write a book about heaven if we matched what the scripture says. And they describe in such detail these glorious things and the people they say. And my take on all of that is it's bogus.

There's leaven in it. And there's an angle in that to get people off the Bible. It's a satanic thing at its very core to get people off the Bible.

Look back at 2 Corinthians chapter 5. One more verse and then we'll move on. Just refuting this thought of people dying and going to heaven and coming back.

2 Corinthians 5. And just notice this one small little statement the Apostle Paul makes in parentheses.

[11 : 00] Verse number 7. For we walk by faith. Not by sight. Not by sight. If God is sending messengers back to earth to write their accounts and their visions of the third heaven and their time before the throne and the angels and the river of life and on and on that they talk about.

Then the Apostle Paul lied to the church when he told us that we walk by faith. Not by sight. We can throw him out.

We can throw the rest of his writings out if he lied to us about that. And when we throw him out then let's just get back to visions and revelations of the Lord. And let's go all the way into trips into the heavenly realm.

We might as well meditate. We might as well do like the eastern religions and try to get ourselves out of our frame. And try to go on and experience something else in a different spiritual realm.

We might as well just get into that if that's what this is. If that's what God's allowing. So we need to be careful with what we read. And the reason I say this is because I'm not thinking that everybody in this church is so gullible and naive about this.

[12 : 10] But I don't know. And I know a woman that I grew up. She was a Sunday school teacher. When I was a child. And I grew up all the way up into my 30s.

And this lady was just a solid faithful member of the church. A servant of God. Just do anything. The only thing I've ever known about her is to be at church and to be with a smile and to do whatever.

She's just a blessing. And one day after a service she came up to me with a book. What do you think about this book? I'd like you to read it. And I looked at it and I recognized exactly what the concept was.

Somebody died. Went to heaven. Ten minutes in heaven. Or whatever the book was exactly. And I just was like, I don't buy it. She's like, yeah, but you just need to read it. You need to read it.

Because why? Because she read it and it convinced her that this person went to heaven. And so I said, okay, I'll read it. I'll read it and then be ready for what I come back with though.

[13 : 09] Because I'm telling you. And so she was frustrated when I gave the book back to her that I wasn't on her side with what was in the Bible or what was in the book and so forth.

But I don't want you to be that lady. If she's been around church for 30 and 40 years and been around preaching and the word of God and all of that, serving and teaching and gets sucked into something that just kind of has a little sweep you off your feet with some colorful language and emotional appeal, then maybe you too could be deceived and could get your heart off of the word of God and start to buy into something.

Once that happens, the door is cracked. And then the devil knows exactly how to get you. Exactly. He'll start with something small. It's always something small.

And so let's be careful and not allow it one time. Let's just stick with the Bible. That's our source. All right. So just wanted to start with that little thought and try to help to establish why I believe all of that is nonsense and it's not biblical.

It's not the Lord's working in our age. And now just quickly, there's some teachings about heaven that are floating around in other religions. Here's what a few of them say. There's certain pagan religions that suppose that there are seven layers, just one on top of the other, seven layers of heaven.

[14 : 28] And this is also, it kind of has its roots, if I understand, pretty far back in some pagan religions. But it's also crept into some others, even more modern day religions, like Islam espouses this.

And Judaism will grab onto some of this. And for them, they'll try to take it, what I read, into the word of God. And it's just, it's laughable how they attempt to say, well, God was with Adam in the garden of Eden.

But when the sin came, then God removed himself one layer from man. And then when this happened, they try to just find, the basic idea is there's a teaching that's out there in the world of seven layers. Now let's try to take that and find how that fits into the word of God.

And therefore they started, there's a structure of God, you know, rescinding and pulling back to the seventh layer. And then his descent or his reaching back out toward man, coming back six, five, four, three, two, one.

And it's just absurd to me. And it's not, if that's true, it's not plainly taught in the Bible, even remotely, plainly taught. It's just stretching and twisting and find a way.

[15 : 33] Hinduism teaches there's 14 worlds. There's seven above and there's seven beneath. And so that, this is all pagan garbage that fits into this thought of seven, if you want to call them worlds or call them layers or call them degrees of heaven, whatever.

However, the Mormons teach there are three different degrees of heaven. And each one has a different name. And these names are the telestial heaven, which is just a completely made up word.

It's not anywhere in the history of civilization until this vision of Joseph Smith and his partner gets this thing and they write it all out. And so there's a new word on the table, a telestial heaven.

Then there's the terrestrial heaven for number two. And then the celestial heaven. And what is beyond that would be outer darkness for just those very few horrible wicked. But what they teach is in the resurrection, you get a certain degree of what heaven will be for you.

And the celestial is the one you'd want to be. That's like the third heaven. What Paul was caught up to is what they teach. And then the other two are just not for those not as faithful or didn't follow the Mormon doctrines of marriage and baptism and et cetera, et cetera.

[16 : 41] And so that's their teaching. And so there's a couple ideas out there floating around. And if you're going to seek the truth, which one are you going to land on? Where are you going to find truth?

Because there's a variety of beliefs about the afterlife or about what heaven is or where it is. And we need to know what to believe. Some teach it's just a concept. It's just a concept. It's not a reality.

It's just kind of a utopian figment that we desire or that we could float into or something and come back to earth. And there's such teachings out there.

How are you going to know what to believe? And that's what we want to do in this Sunday school time is to study the Bible. What does the Bible say? If the Bible doesn't have anything to say, then we'll just be left in the dark.

If the Bible has something to say on it, then we'll believe it. And we'll take this as truth. Jesus Christ said, thy word is truth. And so we'll take the Bible teaching as truth. Now, how I want to begin this, I want to start off rather simple, rather conceptual.

[17 : 43] Meaning, I want to study what the Bible might say. A few little thoughts here that what exists in the presence of God. And it may borrow from some other text that deal with not specifically what we would say heaven, but maybe New Jerusalem.

I think it's safe to do this. I'm not trying to mislead you. I'm telling you up front what I'm doing. But I'm trying to give you some simple conceptual ideas of what it would be to be in heaven or God's presence.

Because I'm telling you, the scripture, if you start into this, I'm not so sure about some things anymore. I'm not going to try to confuse you.

But, well, I'm just telling you. After we get through some of that, I'll attempt to get a little more specific, if possible. Because my head's spinning on a few things that you just kind of think are true.

Because you hear them. Or because somebody teaches them. Or it's just, but it's very vague. Until you actually start studying the words of the Bible. Look up the word heaven. Or look up the word heavens.

[18 : 45] And just try to build an outline. You might find yourself confused about things you thought were true. Now, the first thing I want to do here is to give you what's called a law of contrast.

And it's a biblical principle of, or it's a principle of Bible interpretation. Where you contrast some things to, the truth gets revealed. It's very common in the Proverbs.

And to give you an understanding of God does this. When he tells his people he wants them to be holy people. And righteous people before him. They could say, well, okay, so then what do you want us to do? And you know what he tells them?

Thou shalt not. Not, not, not. All of the thou shalt. Then, if you don't do, that is your righteousness. Is following my laws and words.

So it's a contrast. And it's kind of a what not to do. To show you how he wants you to be. And so one way to study heaven, I think, is by considering what it is not.

[19 : 41] It may sound odd to you at first. We want to know what the Bible says about heaven. But I think this is really the most relatable thing, really. And the reason is, is until we're changed.

And until you and I have immortal and incorruptible and spiritual bodies and minds. I think it's going to be hard for us to fully understand what awaits us.

Now, let me start with example number one. Look at Deuteronomy 26. Deuteronomy chapter 26. And I'm just going to give you a couple quick verses here that all say the same thing.

And to make a quick little point. Deuteronomy 26. And notice verse number 15.

Look down from thy holy habitation from heaven and bless thy people Israel.

[20 : 50] What is heaven in that verse? It's a holy place. God's holy habitation. I'll show you just a few more quick verses. Same thing. Look at 2 Chronicles 30.

I just want to give you more than one. By no means running a full chain. 2 Chronicles 30. And the last verse of the chapter, verse 27.

2 Chronicles 30, verse 27. Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people.

And their voice was heard and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven. So heaven up.

It's up. And it's his holy dwelling place. One more, and that is Psalm 20. Psalm 20 and verse number 6.

[22 : 05] Psalm 20, verse number 6. The Bible reads, Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed. He will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

So what is heaven? From the scriptures here, just three of them. But from the scriptures, it's a holy habitation of God. It's a holy place. So what is that? What does that look like?

What does a holy place look like? What does a holy place feel like? Have you ever seen a holy place? Have you ever experienced a holy place?

The answer is no, you haven't. So just hearing that does not give you an understanding of what that is. holiness. If you think you have an idea of what holiness is or the holiness of God or is holy, you're so far short in what you think.

I'm telling you. But the way that you can kind of grasp it, the way that it can become a little bit relatable to you and I, what holiness is, is by considering what it's not.

[23 : 18] You and I have spent every single day of our life on a cursed dirt, inside sinful flesh, amongst a world that the Bible says, the whole world lieth in wickedness.

That is our concept of the world of life. At the best. At the best state, the Bible says, man is altogether vanity. And if you think you just know the word holy and you know what that means because you read it in the Bible where it says holy Bible on the cover, I'm trying to get you to see, you don't have any real true understanding of what that is or what that looks like or what that's going to feel or what that experience will be to be in God's holy habitation.

It's more than just a word. Now, I don't think we can comprehend that level of holiness until maybe what will help us, though, is to consider what it's not.

To consider what it's not. So let's look at something that it's not quickly. Revelation 21. And again, I'm borrowing from the New Jerusalem here, this city. This is called a holy city. In chapter 21, to make this point, look at Revelation 21.

And two things from this chapter that we can confidently say will not be in heaven, thus allowing it or establishing its holiness in a sense, is that heaven is a place without sin and it's a place without sinners.

[24 : 54] In Revelation 21, here's the sinners in verse 8. But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

They'll be absent from God's holy place. Now look at verse 27. The last verse. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now I know I'm talking about the city New Jerusalem here. I'm using this to show God's nature and this thought of being in the presence of God. Heaven is a place without sin, a place without sinners, and therefore a holy place.

Now how else are you going to understand what the holiness of God looks like or feels like or just I feel like the light that emanates from his being is going to be so forceful and powerful.

I think his holiness is going to be on such grandeur and display that you can sense it, you can feel it just blow right through your body. Let me give you a thought here.

[26 : 12] When I look at chapter 20, Revelation 20 and verse 11, when his face is unveiled, verse 11, I saw a great white throne in him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.

That is the entire creation just dissolves with fervent heat, Peter says. It melts. When God reveals and unleashes his glorious power and his holiness, it just can't stand in his sight.

Now, that might give you some concept and understanding why there's this great deep and why the, when back in the beginning that there was darkness upon the face of the deep and the thick clouds and all of that, it's putting a barrier and a layer between the holy brightness, purity of God and everything else.

All right, so heaven's a place, a holy place that helps us to understand it by contrasting maybe what won't be there. Things that defile, things that work abominations, abominable people, fearful and murderers and on and on, that won't be there.

That might help you get a little glimpse of it. I'll give you another example before we're done. Come back to Psalm 16. And keep your place in Revelation.

[27 : 43] If you already lost it, I want to come back to 21, save you some time. We'll be in Revelation 21 in a moment. Look at Psalm 16. Considering what the Bible describes, what it's like to be in the presence of God where His holy habitation is.

Psalm 16. And you can always do with a good 1611 every now and then. Verse 11 says, Heaven is a place of perfect life, of perfect peace, of perfect joy from that verse, fullness of joy, of perfect pleasure.

You know that the Bible describes there's pleasures of sin, but that's not the kind of pleasure that's in heaven. It's something far higher than the pleasures that sin affords this flesh.

It's perfect joy. And it's perfect pleasure. Now come back to Revelation 21. And how are we going to understand what perfect joy and pure, godly, holy pleasure looks like and feels like?

I think the only thing relatable to you and I is when you're saved in the new man, you can get stirred inside a little bit. You can get some joy in your spirit.

[29 : 18] Even living in this dark world, you could still inside have the light of life inside of you. But that, I mean how, it's just inside of the new man.

This flesh still is on top of it, just squeezing it and pushing it out as quickly as it can. And the world and all the sin, it's just pushing those good feelings that God puts in the new man.

The fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace. It just wants to squash that as quickly as possible. And so until this wretched man is done away with, will we even have an opportunity to experience what fullness of joy is and the path of life, perfect life.

You have eternal life in your new man, the new creature. But do you feel that? Do you sense that? It's not coursing through your veins. It's not in your blood.

So it's real, but you can't feel it yet. Not until that adoption, the redemption of our body. Now, you may think you have an idea, a little glimpse, probably just a glimpse of what joy and pleasure is in the Lord, but I think you're not even close again.

[30 : 32] I don't think you have any idea. And so one thing we can contrast though is if we could eliminate all of the ugly things of this life, it might help us to understand a little bit of the perfect pleasure and joy of heaven.

Look at 21 and verse number four. God helped this to come ASAP. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Heaven is a place of perfect life, of perfect joy and pleasure. And part of what's going to make that a reality or something we can relate to at least is that it'll be a place without death and without sorrow and without crying and without pain.

And these things from our Bible, those are the wages of sin. Death. And it may not be your sin specifically in all of these cases. It could just be the consequences of living in this world and living in this flesh.

In some ways, all of those things listed in verse four is something you earn through your sin. But in other ways, it's just the experience of living in a fallen world where it is wicked and you're going to experience bad things.

[31 : 58] You're not just going to float through this life because you're saved. And so you're going to be subjected to this. But when it's all removed, and I know it doesn't tell us what heaven's going to be like, but it tells us what it's not going to have.

And all of those things we've felt and experienced and will continue to experience the longer we live. the heartache and the pain and the disappointments and the things that just, like, just get in there and just stir your gut.

It's just going to vanish. And it's a blessing when joyous things happen in this life. You know, you get these good things that happen. It's this or that.

You know, just different things you rejoice over in this life. And then the ones that hurt, they just take you down and sometimes take the feet out from underneath you and they hurt.

There's sorrow and pain and tears. And to consider that you won't ever have to deal with that again, that's a blessing in and of itself. It doesn't tell you what the joy is going to feel like and the pleasure, but it does tell you, I know what that one feels like and I sure do look forward to not having to deal with any of that again.

[33 : 07] So, that's something that we can understand about heaven by contrasting what's not going to be there. I'll give you a third one next week. And then, Lord willing, we'll go forward and look into a heavenly experience that John had through the book of Revelation.

Just kind of pull out some things that he says by way of vision of what he saw or what he might have experienced being in the presence of God or what he wrote. We'll try to call that a heavenly experience.

Maybe some of the things that heaven is versus what we're starting with what it's not. So, that's how we'll kind of tackle this for now and then, as we go forward, I think we'll try to locate those one, two, and three heavens and, uh, I won't say anything more about that because I don't know where it's going to go after that.

So, let's take a break there and enjoy some fellowship and we'll come back at Tentacle.