

IF I DIE BEFORE I WAKE. . .

The Life I Was Meant to Live (Pt. 4)

Small Group Questions

Introduction: Describe one of your best friendships? What made this relationship so special?

- 1. “Heaven will be an addition not a subtraction.” In what ways have you thought heaven might be a disappointment to you? How does this statement influence your thinking about heaven?**
- 2. What has been some of your thoughts or assumptions when it came to relationships in heaven? How has this message influenced your thinking about relationships in heaven?**
- 3. How have you struggled in your relationship with God? How do you think heaven will be different in your relationship with God?**
- 4. What has been your thoughts or assumptions about angels? Read Hebrews 1:14. In what ways have the angels served us in this life?**
- 5. What are your initial thoughts about what the Bible says about marriage in heaven? How has this message influenced your thinking about this relationship in heaven?**
- 6. When you get to heaven who are you going to thank for their spiritual influence in your life on earth?
Who would you most want to influence for heaven? Ask God to provide opportunities for you to invest in their spiritual eternity.**

Ecclesiastes 3:11; John 5:24-29; Luke 10:20

Eccles. 3:11 (NLT)

God has planted eternity in the human heart.

Eternity sits in the heart of a man. Regardless of what you believe about God and the Bible it's so difficult for man to accept that this life is all there is; there is a tug and a pull and a yearning for an afterlife.

John 5:24-29 (ESV)

Truly, truly, I say to you, ^(A) whoever hears my word and ^(B) believes him who sent me has eternal life. He ^(C) does not come into judgment, but ^(D) has passed from death to life.

When Jesus comes again, every one will appear before the judgment seat of God.

If you're a Christian, you will be wearing Christ's robe, the robe of righteousness and so God will pronounce you not guilty and welcome you into His Heaven. You need not worry about the things done in this life except to ponder the rewards awaiting you for faithful service. That's why Jesus says the believer doesn't come into judgment, he has passed from death to life by placing his faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

²⁵"Truly, truly, I say to you, ^(E) an hour is coming, and is now here, when ^(F) the dead will hear ^(G) the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶^(H) For as the Father has life in himself, ^(I) so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷And he ^(J) has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this, for ^(K) an hour is coming when ^(L) all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come out, ^(M) those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

At the return of Christ there will be a resurrection of every human being and the eternal destiny of every human being will be finalized. You will go to heaven or hell. Randy Alcorn says in his book that earth is the in between world touched by both heaven and hell. I like the analogy. This life, life on earth for the Christian, this is the closest you will ever get to hell. And we've been through it haven't we at times; life has gotten so bad that we think we've experienced what hell must be like. But, as difficult as life gets on earth, it's a mist compared to the deluge of the torment of hell. On the other hand, those who rejected Christ, life on this earth is the closest they will ever get to heaven.

1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Everyday, live in the awareness of a future life. In Luke 10, the disciples had just returned from an exciting and successful mission trip and Jesus brings them back to focus by saying this:

Luke 10:20 (NASB)

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

In heaven you have a name. In Revelation 2 it tells us that we'll get a new name.

I'm not sure what that looks like, maybe if you didn't like your name on earth you'll get a better one in heaven. I don't know. The point is this: as a human being what gives you

identity? You identify yourself by giving a name. The first thing people want to know about you: "What's your name?" In heaven you will have a name, which means you will have personhood. You will be an individual, an identifiable person.

What Will Life in Heaven Be Like?

Many of us wonder about our existence in heaven. Last week we talked about glorified bodies. This week we're going to talk about what to do with those bodies. What will life be like in heaven?

I Will Have RELATIONSHIPS

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Samuel 12:23; Genesis 25:8,9; 1 Corinthians 13:12

The first aspect is that you will have relationships in heaven. We've looked at 1 Thessalonians before. Paul is addressing the question, "What about those who fall asleep, die before Jesus returns?" And he talks about the dead rising and those alive when Jesus returns will meet both Jesus and our loved ones in the sky. Paul was giving the Thessalonians the hope of a reunion. We will see each other in heaven.

Genesis 25:8 (NIV)

Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

Note the phrase, "gathered to his people." It's repeated a half a dozen times in the Old Testament. King David makes a comment about his son who died in early infancy.

2 Samuel 12:23 (NLT)

But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me."

David, along with the Old Testament patriarchs had a hope of reunion with loved ones. They believed that the relationships we had in this life would continue into the next. And it's quite reasonable to us. God created you for relationship. We are relational beings. We don't like loneliness and isolation; we long to know and be known by other human beings. Many of you struggle with the question: "Will I know my loved ones in heaven?" And I just want to ask you, do you believe Heaven will be an addition or a subtraction to your existence? Is heaven going to be a place where God will take away or add too? You think you have relationships now? Think about the closest, most intimate, deep, loving, honest, vulnerable relationship you have in this life? Think about the most wonderful relationship you've ever experienced with another human being? Friends, you haven't touched the tip of the ice berg of what relationships could be until you've reached heaven. Here are the three relationships you'll have in heaven.

1. With God

Revelation 21:1-3; John 17:24; 1 John 3:2

The Bible is clear that heaven is a reunion between you and your creator/redeemer.

Rev. 21:3 (NIV)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.

In Heaven God will live with us in relationship. Jesus prayed this,

John 17:24 (NIV)

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory.

Jesus wanted us to be with Him in heaven. Remember, he's gone to prepare a place for us and he's coming back to get us and take us there to be with Him. To be 'with' anyone speaks to relationship.

1 John 3:2 (NIV)

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

In heaven, we will have a personal, face to face relationship with God.

2. With Angels

Hebrews 12:22; 1:13,14

The book of Hebrews has a lot to say about the angels. In chapter one, it tells us that angels are ministering spirits. God created angels to minister before him to help fulfill His plan. Angels are messengers of God. In chapter thirteen of Hebrews it warns us to be careful, you never know when you might interact with an angel.

Hebrews 12:22 (ESV)

²²But you have come to ^(A) Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, ^(B) the heavenly Jerusalem, and to ^(C) innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to ^(D) the assembly ^[a] of the firstborn who are ^(E) enrolled in heaven, and to ^(E) God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Innumerable, meaning, too many to count, the NIV uses, myriad. How many angels are there? Some people believe that every one on earth has their own guardian angel. If so, how many humans are there on earth, then that would be a lot of angels, right? In heaven we will be able to identify them. Angels have names like Michael and Gabriel. This passage tells us that the angels in heaven are going to be in festal gathering. That's a party. Some translations use, "joyful assembly." You will have fun with the angels.

3. With Believers

Matthew 22:30-32; Matthew 8:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:19,20

Not the least of which is your own family. In Matthew 8:11, Jesus says we will sit down at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Old Testament saints will be identifiable to us. Matthew 22, verse 23 – the Sadducees were a religious group of people who didn't believe in the resurrection. They create a scenario with the intention of giving Jesus a run for his money. Jesus isn't going to be trapped, unable to answer their question and he'll look foolish. Here it is: The law states that a man should marry his dead brother's wife. And so there was this woman who went through seven brothers. And the

question is, “Who is this woman going to be married to in heaven?” Now, let’s forget the question for a moment and talk about the woman. I don’t know about you, but if I was the seventh brother I’d be putting on the breaks and calling Heraldo Reveira to check this woman out, she’s a problem. Did you know that the record in this country is 24 times? She’s from Anderson, Indiana.

²⁹But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong,^(A) because you know neither the Scriptures nor^(B) the power of God.

Sometimes I like to image what Jesus would have said if he lived in the 21st century and was sinful like me. Jesus is standing there facing a hostile audience with an ulterior motive and he says to them: “You people are clueless. You have no idea what you’re talking about.”

³⁰For in the resurrection they neither^(C) marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

“Like the angels,” what does he mean? Angels don’t cohabit, they don’t procreate and they never die. They are spiritual, eternal beings with identity and purpose. How does that inform our understanding of our existence in heaven? First of all: There is no marriage in heaven. Now, that will affect people in two different ways. Some of you are thinking. Whoo, Hoo! No marriage. Like me, some of you are quite anxious about this reality because we’ve had wonderful marriages and we want that to continue. What is heaven going to be like when it comes to marriage and family? Two things I want you to think about. Number one – on earth marriage was needed because man needed a helper and woman needed a protector provider; and we needed to do what God said: be fruitful and multiply. And if we did it right, that relationship was very fulfilling and meaningful. But in heaven – man doesn’t need a helper, woman doesn’t need a protector and we don’t need to multiply. So, let’s go back to a question I posed earlier: Do you believe Heaven is going to be an addition or a subtraction to your existence? In heaven will God take away or add too? He’s going to add too. Just like your earthly body can’t be compared to your glorified body; your earthly relationships pale to what relationship will be like in heaven. You think you had a good relationship with your spouse on earth? You can’t even imagine what God has prepared for your relationship in heaven. It’s going to be a whole different, much improved experience. Second – it’s not that there won’t be marriage in heaven, there will be marriage in heaven – just not to each other, instead, we’ll all be married to Jesus. Remember, heaven is first and foremost about Jesus. Marriage is the most intimate of relationships on earth. Marriage is a uniquely exclusive relationship between one man and one woman. It’s in marriage where the deepest yearnings of belonging and intimacy are shared in covenant between two individuals. God designed it that way. And that’s why the apostles used the institution of marriage to illustrate our ultimate relationship with Jesus. That’s why the Bible describes heaven as feasting at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We will be His bride. Think about all the remarriages

that go on in life – in heaven what if God assigned you your third husband when you really wanted your second one. And what if your second wife didn't want you? What kind of mess would that be.

³¹And as for the resurrection of the dead, ^(D) have you not read what was said to you by God: ^{32(E)} 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

Jesus is arguing for the existence of an afterlife. God isn't a God of dead men, He's the God of living human beings awaiting their heavenly existence which will be an intimate, eternal marriage relationship with Jesus. So we will have relationship with those we love. Before we go on, let's talk about children and parents. Will parents and children recognize each other, will the family relationship remain? Scripture does not speak to this directly. But again, from what God has revealed, we can make an educated guess about this question which, I believe is similar to the marriage question. The nature of all our relationships will be different and they will be better. Heaven will be an addition, not a subtraction. Parents and children will recognize each other, and their relationship will be more intimate and more meaningful than anything they experienced on earth. If you had a problem parent, or a problem child and you're both believers: take heart: you will not pick up where you left off. You will begin with a renewed glorified relationship. You will have generational relationships because age and time will not be a factor in heaven. And one more thing: what about children who were never born either through miscarriage or abortion? Since 1973 over 43 million children have not lived long enough to experience life on earth outside the womb. And in a church this size it's safe to say that several families in this room have been affected by the decision for whatever reason to terminate a pregnancy. So, first – You need to know, anyone who played a part in that decision – God's grace is sufficient, Jesus paid it all. You will wear the robe of righteousness and stand before God forgiven and unashamed. You will be welcomed in to heaven as one of His own dearly beloved child. Second, And even more amazing and wonderful to look forward to; that little child - and it is a child. Life begins at conception and from that point on to whenever the life of that child was terminated; a child who never lived long enough to commit sin or understand sin or comprehend faith or how to respond to the gospel, they are graciously received by God in heaven. And you will see that child, recognize that child, that child will recognize you and you will embrace in the environment of God's eternal love.

1 Thes. 2:19-20 (NIV)

For 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? [20] Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

In heaven you will relate to those you have helped become Christians. Paul longed to see in heaven those who came to Christ because of His ministry. That's going to be awesome, because here's the deal my friends: you have no idea the number of people

who have influenced for Christ because of your Christian example, because you've supported the work of the church, because you went on mission trips or supported others in mission work. Directly or indirectly you have participated in the salvation of a host of human beings that you won't even be aware of until you reach heaven. And that's why Jesus says this:

Luke 16:9 (NIV)

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

This has been a confusing verse for a lot of people but basically here's what it means: Do you have money? What are you doing with your money? How much of your money are you wasting, spending it on yourself, buying things that are going to rot, rust away or get burned up on the last day? Jesus is telling us: put your money where your eternity is. Someone once said that money can buy companions but it can't buy friends. And yet, that's exactly what Jesus is saying; money can buy friends when you invest it in the kingdom of God. When you use your money to help another human being find Jesus. You're making a friend forever. So, in heaven you will have relationships with God, with the angels and with every human being who has placed their faith in Christ.

One Question to Ask: Who Do I Want in Heaven With Me?

Who do you want to welcome into eternal dwellings? Whom do you want to welcome you into eternal dwellings? You are not promised tomorrow. The Bible says, today is the day of salvation. What are you going to do to make an eternal investment in their lives?

Next Week: Read Revelation 21 & 22

Text Your Questions to 219-379-714