

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.
Vol. 1 January 20, 2019 No. 3*

Heaven

by Doy Moyer

It seems at times that heaven gets downplayed. There are several senses of the term "heaven" in Scripture. We may think of the "heavens and earth" as all of the universe (Gen 1:1), heaven as the expanse of the sky, or standing for spiritual hosts. Passages are numerous.

There is also ample evidence that heaven is used to refer to God's dwelling and the place from which God establishes His authority and provides blessings. The passages below, I believe, sufficiently show this. As you consider these (and more, as this is not exhaustive), also consider that we are to seek that which is above, where Christ is (Col 3:1-4). If we know where Jesus is, then we know where we ought to be setting our minds.

Notice the repeated ideas that our hope is laid up in heaven, inheritance is reserved in heaven, names are recorded in heaven, and our treasures are to be stored up in heaven. This is vital, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If our treasure is where our hearts are, and the treasure we are laying up is to be in heaven, there where ought our hearts to be?

None of this diminishes the fact that our hope is in the resurrection (Phil 3:10-11), or that we look for the "new heavens and new earth" (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1; Rom 8:18-25). It seems that some set "heaven" as our hope over against the "new heavens and new earth" and the resurrection as something entirely different. I don't believe this is an either/or situation, but a both/and simply because passages are numerous on both counts yet are never put at odds with each other. Whatever the "new heavens and new earth" will be like exactly as the new order to come, it will be completely in accord with heaven as God's dwelling place and the holder of our treasure. If even now the tree of life is both in paradise and before God's throne (Rev 2:7; 22:1-5), then there ought to be no problem with the idea of a new heavens and new earth also being called paradise and heaven. It certainly is no problem for God, though we may yet lack full understanding.

This hope will be fully realized in the resurrection, so all of this goes hand in hand. Yet these passage demonstrate that thinking of heaven is also what we ought to be doing now. Consider:

The Kingdom is "of heaven" (Matt 3:2, 5:1ff, 10:7; 13, etc).

The Father is "in heaven" (Matt 5:16, 45; 6:1; 7:11, 21; 10:32-33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19; Mark 11:25).

God's will is done in heaven (Matt 6:9) and can be "bound in heaven" (Matt 16:19).

Treasures may be stored "in heaven" (Matt. 6:20; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22), and heaven is where reward is found (Luke 6:23).

Heaven is the source of authority (Matt 21:25; Mark 8:11; 11:30-31; Luke 11:16; 20:4-5; John 3:27; Heb. 12:25).

Angels are "in heaven" (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; 13:32; Luke 2:15), are "of heaven" (24:36), and "from heaven" (Luke 22:43; Gal 1:8).

Heaven is distinguishable from earth (Matt 28:18) and contrasted with Hades (Luke 10:15).

Names are recorded in heaven (Luke 10:20) and saints are "enrolled in heaven" (Heb 12:23).

There is joy in heaven over sinners who repent (Luke 15:7).

We sin "against heaven" (Luke 15:18), and God's wrath is revealed "from heaven" (Rom 1:18).

Jesus was carried up "into heaven" (Luke 24:51) and "went into heaven itself" (Heb 9:24); He is at "God's right hand, having gone into heaven" (1 Pet 3:22). Heaven received Jesus (Acts 3:21). This answers the question of where Christ is and where we ought to be setting our minds.

Jesus descended from heaven and into heaven (John 3:13, 31; 6:33, 38; 1 Cor. 15:47). The Master is "in heaven" (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1).

The "third heaven" is equated with Paradise (2 Cor 12:2-4). The Tree of Life is said to be in the "Paradise of God" (Rev 2:7), and the Tree of Life is also in God's presence (Rev 22:1-5).

A Christian's citizenship is "in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).

Hope is laid up in heaven (Col 1:5) and our inheritance is reserved in heaven (1 Pet 1:3-5).

The Holy Spirit was sent from heaven (1 Pet 1:12). Jesus will come "from heaven" (1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7).

Never minimize the importance of thinking about heaven. However God may bring about the complete fulfillment of our inheritance, the resurrection, or the new heavens and new earth, we are clearly taught to think in heavenly terms. All spiritual blessings in Christ as "in the heavenly places," and we thank God because when Jesus, our hope, comes again, we will "appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4).

Gossip's Corrupt Fruit

by Tom Moody

"GOSSIP" is idle talk or rumors about others. The word can also be applied to the person who initiates or repeats such idle talk.

Many jokes are made about gossip. Some seem to view gossip as a harmless exercise – an annoyance or nuisance at worst.

Christians should realize that gossip (slander, tale bearing, being a busy body) is sinful and carries with it the potential of much heartache and devastation. The sinfulness and seriousness of gossip is clearly illustrated by its effects which are listed in a number of scriptures.

1. Gossip makes a fool of the one who practices it. "...he that uttereth a slander is a fool", Proverbs 10:18.

2. Gossip causes deep wounds. "The words of a tale bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly", Proverbs 26:22.

3. Gossip will separate close friends. "A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends", Proverbs 16:28.

4. Gossip brings shame upon the tale bearer. "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and disclose not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame and thine infamy turn not away", Proverbs 25:9-10.

If you are tempted to gossip, work on purifying your heart (because evil speech proceeds from the heart, Matthew 15:18-20), increase your love for others, and learn to use your speech "to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers", Ephesians 4:29.

Our Invisible Enemy

Author Unknown

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:11-12)

Doubled over and choking, they staggered to hospitals by the thousands, crying for help and refuge from a colorless cloud of gas that turned Bhopal, India into a tomb on a terrible December day in 1984. "We have been working nonstop to treat the people and still they are coming," said one volunteer who tried to help doctors and nurses cope with streams of injured at five jammed hospitals. Several thousand died in the accident at the Union Carbide plant, many never fully aware of what hit them.

No enemy is harder to fight than an invisible one. Believers also face an unseen adversary, who leads the forces arrayed against us in spiritual conflict. Let us be diligent to watch and pray.