

TEACHING GOAL

To study the biblical teaching of the nature of heaven.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?
- A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgement, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

S.C. 38, L.C. 90 W.C. of F. XXXIII, Savoy 32, Young 145

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Revelation 21,22

Support Passages: II Peter 3:10-13, I John 3:2, II Corinthians 12:2-4, Isaiah 65:17ff, 66:22

BIBLE STORY

Revelation 21: The heavenly city.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Revelation 22:5

5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

APPLICATION

The ultimate goal of the Christian is to glorify God and to enjoy Him. Man is never to cease from His dominion or the work to which God has put him. The ultimate reward of the Saint is eternity with God and heirship with Christ of the benefits of sonship.

SUMMARY

The Bible does not give us a great deal of information about heaven. Heaven, no doubt, is a place, but is it a recreated earth? Is heaven located somewhere in the universe, perhaps on another planet in another galaxy or is it another dimension of space-time? We think of heaven as up or above etc., but these really teach us nothing about the location or situation of heaven. The Bible teaches about the character of heaven but not about its precise location, however, we may infer from II Peter 3:12 that it is other than our present situation since the earth, heavens and elements will melt with "intense heat." Whereas God, His holy angels and the Saints who have passed into the intermediate state exist, we can conclude that heaven is a place of abode, a realm of existence that is not possible for mortals to examine.

Jesus spoke of preparing a place for us that contains many mansions¹, therefore the issue that heaven is a place is settled. We might otherwise conceive of heaven as a state of mind or a Nirvana of sorts. We might even believe, as many do, that heaven consists of a Utopia on earth brought about by Marxist principles of socialism and economics! Since the earth is to be destroyed, the utopia concept of Marx is totally false. If there is to be peace on earth, it will be the result of adherence to God's laws alone. Even so the present earth is to be destroyed. Heaven apparently is an estate of existence beyond our present experience.

The Bible teaches us some of the characteristics of heaven. It is a place of reward in which there is no pain, sickness, violence, want or grief. It is the consummation of grace begun in the sinner. It is eternal social bliss. It is an estate of eternal happiness which happiness is not that of the Hedonist or the Mohammedan but a happiness on the terms of the True and Living God who alone determines the good of mankind. We are assured by God that it is a desirable state of being.²

We have heard people say that they prefer the company of their friends in hell or as someone once indicated to me, given the choice of "God's law or chaos", "I prefer chaos." That which may be desirable or good for people may only be established on God's terms. We may not actually know or understand what is good for us. We think of heaven as a place where we will be free from injustice and suffering, and indeed it is, but much more. As the apostle John writes, "beloved now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."³ No mortal has yet had this experience. Paul, caught up to the "third heaven" or "paradise", heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak.⁴ Evidently there are aspects of heaven that are quite beyond our present understanding.

¹ John 14:1-7

² I Peter 1:3-9

³ I John 3:2

A number of Scripture passages refer to a re-creation of the earth.⁵ Dabney believes that although this present earth is to be destroyed by fire, it is not to be annihilated, rather it will be renovated.⁶ The inhabitants of heaven will be its only occupants. Kik believes that the New Heavens and the New Earth are the Church which culminates in the eternal state.⁷ There is a difference of opinion then as to the nature of heaven among commentators in our persuasion but all agree that the godly individual will not be lulled to inaction by the hope that eternal life will bring an end to our present strife. Rather the Saint will obey God, glorify and enjoy Him and serve Him with vigor.

⁴ II Corinthians 12:2-4

⁵ II Peter 3:13, Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, Revelation 21:1

⁶ Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1972, p 851

⁷ Kik, An Eschatology of Victory, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971, pp 243, 244