TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor /Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#508 A Wonderful Savior
#450 Give Me the Bible

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
#383 Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#528 I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Sermon: "Great Power "
Acts 8:1-25

#945 Kneel at the Cross
#523 I Know The Lord Will Find a Way

Closing Prayer by: Andre Jones

Welcome by: Don Taylor

Evening Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#968 Oh, They Tell Me of a Home
#882 No Tears in Heaven

Opening Prayer: Ken Coleman
#957 This World Is Not My Home

Sermon: "The Need of Integrity"
Job 2:9-10

#939 O Why Not Tonight?
#988 I'll Be List'ning

Closing Prayer: Wayne Noonkester

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

May 1, 2022

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

What the Bible Says About Heaven

This is the first in a series of articles recently published by Wes McAdams on his blog "Radically Christian." Many people have come to me with questions in this area, and this series does a good job of answering them. Without necessarily endorsing every specific point he makes, I think the views he presents are certainly more Biblical than what we often picture; accordingly, we will publish this series over the next five weeks. I commend it to your attention. BP

What the Bible says about heaven is quite different from what many Christians have in mind. Christians today think of heaven as the final destination of the saved. We ask how to get to heaven, who will be in heaven, who won't be in heaven, and if we will recognize each other in heaven. Unfortunately, these questions miss the heart of the biblical story of heaven. This is the first in a new series exploring what the Bible says about heaven.

What is Heaven?

Both the Hebrew word ("shamayim") and the Greek word ("ouranos") that we translate "heaven" refer to everything above the surface of the earth. In English, we have more than one word for these spaces:

sky (everything between earth and earth's atmosphere)
outer space (everything beyond earth's atmosphere)
heaven (the invisible realm where God dwells)

But to the ancient Jewish people, these were all, "the heavens." This is why Paul speaks of a man who, *Was caught up to the third heaven* (**2 Cor 12:2**). Ancient Jewish people pictured the heavens as having multiple dimensions, layers, or levels. So, we need to understand, in biblical terminology, "the heavens" encompass all that is above us.

Furthermore, because the heavens are above and the earth is beneath, the heavens are a place of ruling and reigning (see **Eph 3:10**). In other words, the things in the heavens are not only above us in a spatial sense, but more importantly for this discussion, in a hierarchical sense. Of course, God is above all the rulers and authorities in the heavens and on the earth, because he created all things.

So, when we think about heaven, especially as it pertains to God's dwelling place, we should think of it as being the place of highest or greatest authority. Heaven is above, not because you can get there in a spaceship, but because God occupies the most exalted space over all creation.

The Tabernacle as a Copy of Heaven

The book of Hebrews explains that the tabernacle (the tent that was later replaced by the Jerusalem temple) was a *copy and shadow of the heavenly things* (**Heb 8:5**). Therefore, understanding how the tabernacle was constructed can help us understand what heaven is all about.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Joe Edd Stifflemire is taking chemo treatments. He will be having test run this week.

Linda Frank will be having test run in the future.

Susan McCain is in UTMB Galveston. She has an infection and is being given antibiotics. Her phone number is 409-266-7256.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Gary Nielsen, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meeting Monday, May 2nd at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, May 3rd at 8:00 a.m.

We will have a meal on Wednesday, May 4th at 5:30 p.m. in the family life center.

Primetimers will be going to Saltgrass Steak House on Tuesday, May 10th at 6:00 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board. A driver is needed.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Sylvia Leal and her family on the death of her husband Joe Leal. He passed away last Friday and the funeral was yesterday.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor		
Robert Ward		

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

is the weekly bulletin of the Liberty Church of Christ 3201 North Main, Liberty Texas 77575
Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;
Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737
Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ

The innermost portion of the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. This section housed the Ark of the Covenant, God's seat of mercy. In other words, it was a representation of God's throne room. When the high priest entered this section once a year, it was as if he was approaching God's throne to seek forgiveness for the collective sins of the people.

Separating the Most Holy Place from the next section, the Holy Place, was a thick curtain. Then there was a second curtain that separated the Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle (see **Heb 9:1-10**). These curtained sections seem to me to represent the layers of the heavens that separate humans from God's heavenly throne room.

So, if you picture the high priest entering into the Most Holy Place once a year, it is as if he is acting out an ascension through the skies into the throne room of God. (There is also a sense in which God descended to make this drama possible.) But what this high priest was only pretending to do (ascend to the throne room of God), Jesus actually did when *he passed through the heavens* (**Heb 4:14**). The Hebrew writer says, *Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf* (**Heb 9:24**).

This is why the Ascension of Christ is so important to Christian theology. Saying, "Jesus is in heaven," does not mean Jesus has gone where all "good people" go. It means the resurrected Jesus is enthroned above all things, as both King and High Priest (**Heb 1:3-4**). Jesus occupies the place of highest authority.

The City of God in Heaven

Not only is God's throne room in the heavens, so is his garden city. The city of God seems to be a cross between an idyllic Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden. Revelation gives us a beautiful picture of, *the holy city, new Jerusalem* (**Rev 21:2**).

This heavenly city is the antithesis of earthly cities. Human beings have corrupted every city on earth. Violence, oppression, indulgence, and exploitation are the way of life in every city. We have stained every brick and every stone with blood. Death and decay form the very foundations of our cities. But human hands did not make the city of God. Its *designer and builder is God* (**Heb 11:10**).

This city will one day descend from heaven to be received by God's people. And this is why the writer of Hebrews refers to it simply as *the city that is to come* (**Heb 13:14**).

Heaven is Not Our Final Destination

That is why, when we talk about spending eternity "in heaven," I believe we are actually getting the picture backward. The Bible says the city of God will come to us from heaven. God will no longer be "up" there, separated from us. In the end*, the dwelling place of God is with man* (**Rev 21:3**).

The New Testament describes the present heavens and earth as passing away. God will tear open the skies, like the curtain of the temple. He will roll them back like a scroll. Fire will destroy all the worldly kingdoms, empires, nations, and cities (**2 Pet 3:7**). And after the present heavens and earth pass away, the city of God will descend like a beautifully adorned bride (**Rev 21:1-4**).

I realize, it may surprise you to hear that the city of God will descend from heaven. That is why I'm writing this series. Hopefully, by the end of the study, we will see why heaven holds all we hope to become and receive but is not our final destination.