



Heaven & Hell

Part Two: Heaven

Opening: Media & Recap

Spend some time recapping what students learned last time about hell. Make sure to drive home the point that heaven is real and is not a place where we want to wind up.

If you have access to a pop culture version of heaven (such as The Simpsons' "Thank God it's Doomsday" episode), play a clip now to get teens thinking about what they have been taught about Heaven.

What is Heaven?

At this point, open up the floor to students, asking them to share their perceptions of what heaven is. Make sure to watch the time, as you do not want this portion to take up too much of your time tonight.

Scriptures

Have several students volunteer to read the following Scriptures aloud.

John 18.36; Revelation 21.2; Psalm 103.19; Psalm 8.3; Luke 23.42.43

Engage students in discussion by asking what can we learn about heaven from these passages?

✓ **Heaven is real.** *It isn't just a dream or an empty promise. It is something that is tangible, that is real.*

✓ **Heaven is not resting in the clouds.** *Here we see that heavens can refer to the stars, atmosphere, and creation that we can see off of earth, but it is not a place in the clouds where we fly around with harps.*

✓ **Heaven is a reward.** *Not for a life well lived, but for those who seek Jesus as their Lord and Savior.*

What is so important about Heaven?

Heaven, especially in light of what we explored last week, is the complete opposite of Hell. There is not a lot of concrete explanation in Scripture about what to expect in heaven. But there is enough to know what heaven is not.

Heaven is not a place where people can go to because they lived a good life. When heaven is spoken of in Scripture, it is almost always tied in with Jesus. Let's take a look at Luke 16.19-32 again this week:

Read the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.

We looked at this parable last week in light of hell. The rich man has led a life in which he obviously was not following after Jesus. He was selfish, greedy and did not look to care for the orphans and widows in the world (which we are told is an important part of following Christ in James 1.27). He paid for not choosing Christ by winding up in hell. That was the crime that put Him there.

Heaven has also been... commercialized by American Christians. Have you ever been told that we will get a mansion in heaven? That is a misinterpretation of Scripture at best, and an outright lie at worst. The passage that it comes from is found in John 14.1-3. In it Jesus says: (read the passage aloud from the NIV).

Here Jesus is speaking to the disciples to give them comfort. Soon Jesus will be crucified, and after He tells them this He tells them what they need to do to join Him in this dwelling place. They have to follow Him (Matthew 14.5-6). That's it. A handful of translations have translated the Greek in this passage to be mansion (in my Father's house there are many mansions), when in actuality it means dwelling or residence (either physical place or act of living somewhere). When Jesus talks of going to prepare a place for His disciples, He is actually referencing a Jewish tradition. When a couple would get married, they typically didn't get to know each other very well.

So leading up to the wedding, the groom would build a room onto his father's house for he and his bride to live in for the first year of marriage. He is telling the disciples that they (and we) as the bride of Christ, are to be comforted, because even though He is leaving us, He will come back and we will be united with Him forever. (In Jewish culture, marriage was intended to last forever unless the wife did something to shame the husband or break the purity of the covenant).

Jesus doesn't promise us that we will have mansions and wealth. He doesn't show us that heaven will be a place where we become angels and get harps to play on the clouds. We don't become balls of light that zip around for all eternity. Revelation tells us that we will receive physical bodies, that creation is restored to what it was supposed to be originally. The Garden of Eden in Genesis?

It was intended to be where humanity lived forever.

Heaven is all about God fixing what is broken in this world, from our connection with Him to our broken bond with creation. All of it gets repaired, even the earth itself will be restored to what it was originally supposed to be.

What Does It All Mean?

It means that heaven is not something that we should become so focused on that we lose sight of the present. Jesus calls us to work for change in the world around us (remember James 1 and Matthew 25?), not to focus our attention on what He will do for and with us in the future. Don't get so hung up on the future. Live the life that God gives you now, following in His footsteps. We only get one chance to make this connection with God.