

Sunday Evening May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE IF WE WERE IN HEAVEN RIGHT NOW?

HEAVEN PART 7

Revelation 6:9-11

David Lloyd George the only Welshman ever to become a Prime-Minister of Great Britain once made this statement, “When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of Hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would be no escape.” I don’t think David Lloyd George is the only person that has some serious misconceptions of what Heaven is and what it is going to be like.

However as we study this wonderful subject and this glorious and beautiful place that God has planned and even now is making ready for His children there are some specific things in the Bible that tell us quite a bit about Heaven in general and a number of things specifically. If we take those things and use Godly imagination we can come up with at least some thoughts about what Heaven is like right now that I think are going to prove to be pretty accurate.

I am sharing with you some thoughts tonight set forth in Randy Alcorn’s Book titled Heaven as well as some things from my study in Wayne Grudem’s, Systematic Theology. I hope these things will stimulate your thinking and create in you a sense of holy expectancy about that beautiful place where God’s people are gathering even now with more to follow.

Let’s read those verses again. Revelation 6:9-11 where we see the Fifth Seal is broken and we see a group of people who are called Martyrs. The word *martyr* originated from the [Greek](#) word pronounced *mar-toos*, which actually meant *witness*. Various Bible versions translate the same original word interchangeably as "martyr" or "witness." Eventually, for a very gory reason, *martyr* came to mean the fate of a great number of God's "witnesses" through history - they were killed, often in the most incredibly brutal and bizarre means imaginable. In reading what was done to the Christian martyrs (not for the faint of heart or stomach), it is difficult to comprehend how anyone could treat another human in such a way. But then, it wasn't just a matter of "human nature" - Satan has no doubt been the chief influence

behind the slaughter of God's people from almost the very beginning of time when Cain slew his brother Abel.

Now let's look at that passage with some careful thought and using what we already know of other portions of Scripture as well.

Here are some observations we can make concerning this passage:

1. When these people died on Earth, they were relocated to Heaven. Verse 9 makes that pretty clear.
2. These people, (martyrs) in Heaven were the same ones who were killed for Christ while on earth. Verse 9 also makes that clear. That very fact demonstrates that there is continuity between our identity on Earth and our identity in Heaven. Their personal history extends directly back to their lives on Earth because they refer to it. Those in Heaven are not different people; they are the same people relocated to earth in spirit. They are those referred to in Hebrews 12:23 are the "spirits of the righteous made perfect."
3. People in heaven will be remembered for their lives on Earth. These martyred saints were known and identified as ones slain because of the testimony they had maintained on Earth. Verse 9 makes that clear. These were people who would not compromise their witness or back down in their life for Christ on earth and as a result because of their testimony and Godly living and life they were killed.
4. Notice something interesting now in V 10, "they called out" This means they were able to express themselves audibly. This could suggest that they exist in some physical form (though not yet with their glorified bodies) as they either had vocal chords or some other means to express themselves vocally.
5. This shows that people in Heaven can raise their voices because there in v: 10 it says, "They cried out with a LOUD voice." This indicates they are well able to think, to communicate, and emotional, else why would it refer to LOUD voices, loud indicates passion or fervency of feeling—just like people on earth.
6. Notice also it states, "They cried out with a loud voice, not voices. That indicates they were individuals speaking with one voice or in unity on one issue. Heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.
7. These redeemed persons are fully conscious, able to think, and aware of each other and their common lot, as they speak of "our blood" also in verse 10.

8. They request God to intervene on Earth and to act on their behalf; “How long...until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Do you see that in verse 10?
9. This shows us that those in Heaven are free to ask God questions, which shows they have an audience with God. It also means they yet need to learn or they wouldn't be asking a question. So at this point though they have knowledge it is not a complete knowledge.
10. This seemingly also indicates that people now in Heaven do know what is happening on Earth as they refer in v: 10 directly to “them that dwell on earth.” The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them or had them killed have not yet been judged.
11. I believe this also indicates that when we go to Earth that we won't adopt a passive disinterest in what happens on Earth. It indicates that we will have a nature like Gods in that we will have a deep concern for justice and retribution. Neither God nor we will be satisfied until God's enemies are judged, our bodies are raised, sin and Satan are defeated, Earth is restored, and Christ is rightfully exalted over all.
12. It is also evident from v 10 that these martyrs remember their lives on earth else how would they recall that they were murdered for the cause of Christ.
13. Further these martyrs in Heaven are requesting and what is that but prayer, praying for judgment on their persecutors who are still hurting others. This also seemingly indicates that these in Heaven are both seeing and praying for saints on Earth.
14. Notice in verse 10 also their reference to the attributes to God. They call Him, “holy and true.” This also indicates that they understand the aspects of God's character that make His judgments of sin more understandable.
15. Now notice verse 11. Those in Heaven are distinct individuals: “Then each of them was given a white robe.” Though they have spoken with and in unity previously when they made their request with one “loud voice” there is not one merged identity that obliterates their own uniqueness or existence as individuals. Depending on your translation it states “every one or each one of them.”
16. Elaborating a little more on what I stated earlier, these individuals though not yet in their resurrected bodies must have some type of a physical form, because it would seem weird or at the least unusual for disembodied spirits to be wearing a robe. Now it is true these robes could have a symbolic meaning, but it doesn't mean they couldn't also

- be physical. The martyrs appear to have physical forms that John the Revelator could see.
17. God answers their prayerful questions according to v 11. This indicates once more direct communication and a process that is yet to be fulfilled in Heaven. I say again it shows that though we will have great knowledge in Heaven only God knows everything for these martyrs knew more AFTER God answered their question than before they asked it. Yes, there is learning, receiving of new knowledge in heaven.
  18. God promises to fulfill the martyrs' request or prayer but says they will have to "wait a little longer." That again is where that process or if you please some aspect of time or a measurement of some sort because it states in verse 11. "It was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." This tells me that those in Heaven right now live, in some sense, in anticipation of the future fulfillment of all God's promises even as we believers do now in our present body and spirit.
  19. Mentioning the concept of time once more referred to here. These white-robed martyrs ask God a **time dependent** question. "How long" This shows they are aware of the passing of time and are eager for the coming day of the Lord's judgment. Note that God answers they must wait, what? "A little longer" until certain events transpire on earth. Waiting requires the passing of "time."
  20. Another interesting thing to take note of, the people of God in Heaven have a strong family connection with the followers of Christ on earth. The people serving God on earth who are going to be martyred are referred to as "fellow servants and their brethren." This indicates there is no separation or wall in the family of God. We are one family with those who have gone to Heaven ahead of us. After we go to Heaven we will still be one family with those yet on Earth. In my thinking these verses demonstrate a vital concern between the events and people in Heaven and the events and people on Earth.
  21. One final deduction from these three verses. Our Sovereign God knows right down to the minute detail all that is happening ( Matthew 10:29 and 30 make that pretty clear when it declares he sees when a sparrow falls to the ground. He knows the number of hairs on our head) Yes, God sees presently what is happening right now and what will happen on earth including every drop of blood and every tear that is shed. The Voice of the Martyrs of which we had a representative

here just a month or so ago estimates that more than 150,000 people die for Christ each year, an average of more than 400 each day around the world. God knows the name and the story and the suffering of each one of those martyrs.

22. All of these observations and deductions come from just those three verses in Revelation 6 and unless there is some reason to believe that the realities of this passage apply to only one group of martyrs and to no one else in Heaven, and I see no reason why we can or should confine it to just them. Then we should assume that what is true of them is also true of our loved ones already there, and will be true of us when we die.

**Let's go now to another thought that people have and that is this. Just how much of our life on earth will we remember in Heaven?**

We have already seen that the martyrs there in Rev 6 clearly remembered events from earth including the fact that they underwent great persecution. Now if they remembered their martyrdom there is no reason to expect or think they would forget or not be able to recall the other aspects of their life on earth. Truth be known, we will probably all remember a lot more in Heaven than we do on earth, and we will probably be able to see and praise God for the many times He spared us and intervened on our behalf when we were not even aware of it.

The story of Dives and Lazarus in Luke 16 shows us clearly that memory transcends in some manner from this life to life beyond. Those who endure bad things on earth are comforted according to verse 25. Comfort to be received must be predicated on knowing what one is being comforted for. In other words a memory of what happened. If there were no bad things that could be recalled by Lazarus why would he have been in need of comfort?

Also II Corinthians 5:10 states, "For we must all appear before the judgments seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, (what body is that? The one we had on earth of course) notice, "according to that he had done whether it be good or evil." Certainly we must remember the things that we will give an account for or else how would we know that we are being judged righteously. Because we will be held accountable for a whole lifetime of either good deeds or bad deeds and rewarded accordingly our memory would have to be quickened with regards to our life on earth to recall the things over the previous years. Most of us

can't remember what we had for breakfast let alone the deeds and thoughts of all our previous years.

The entire teaching of eternal rewards hinges on specific acts of faithfulness done while on Earth those are all going to be recalled at the Judgment Seat of Christ where we will be rewarded for their quantity and quality. Rev 19:7-8 tells us that the Bride's wedding dress (fine linen) stands for the righteous deeds of the saints" done on Earth. Our righteous deeds done on this earth will not be forgotten but "will follow" us to Heaven because it states in Rev 14:13 "they shall rest from their labors and their works do follow them." My point in recalling this is the positions of authority and the treasures we are granted in Heaven will perpetually remind us of our life on Earth, because what we do on Earth will earn for us those rewards. A ton of Scriptures bear that out. Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 19:21, Luke 12:33; 19:17, I Timothy 6:19 and Revelation 2:26-28 just to name a few.

God keeps a record in Heaven of what people do on Earth, both believers and unbelievers. We know that record will outlast our life on Earth. Malachi 3:16 refers to a Book of Remembrance and Rev 20:12 declares, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in these books according to their works."

Memory is a basic component of personality. If we are truly ourselves in Heaven, there must be, would have to be a continuity of memory from Earth to Heaven. We will not be a different person but a person marvelously relocated and transformed with an eternal spirit and a glorified body joined into one being. Heaven cleanses us but it does not revise or extinguish our origins of history. Undoubtedly we will remember God's work of grace in our lives on earth that we were delivered, comforted, protected, sustained, empowered and indwelt. It is those very features that will cause us to worship Him for who He is and for what He did for us before we got to Heaven.

Now this issue of memory in Heaven of things, events, and even people on earth raises a lot of questions and considerations that can be really puzzling and troubling. Questions such as, if we have memory of the things we did on earth just how will that keep us from feeling bad and weeping over our many sinful earthly failures? How in the world could it be Heaven if we are aware

of anything bad on Earth? Likewise even more than that, will we be mindful of loved ones, family members that did not make it to Heaven and if so how in the world could we then keep from weeping over that? Do people in Heaven right now see what is happening on Earth? Some of it? All of it? If they do how do they keep from being sad about that?

We will deal with some of them the next time and the weeks to follow the Lord willing.

It is my prayer that some of these questions you find exciting and some of them even a little unsettling and stimulating. It is my hope that by the time we finish with this study you will be able to say, I learned a whole lot about Heaven and at the same time, there are some things that are hard to understand and yet very exciting, and I don't want to miss it for anything in this world.