



### **Introduction**

Growing up whenever my dad, who was our pastor, felt the church was not living right, he would dig out his best sermons on Hell and really go at us until we came to repentance. A good dose of Hell, at least in his mind, did us a lot of good, and to a large extent it worked. We were terrified!

Well today we start a new series of talks on...Heaven.

I want to ask the question, "How would we live if we knew that very soon Heaven would suddenly come crashing into earth?"

### **That Would Be Heaven To Me**

Years ago we would sing a song that went through all the glories about what Heaven would be like. Each verse ended with, "*that would be Heaven to me...*"

The hymn was wrapped around the idea of the amazing changes that will take place when we get to this wonderful place called heaven. But what if it is a fact that our personal heaven and what it will be like will be conditional to how we respond to Jesus and His character building processes during our life on earth?

For instance, how would you feel if you are bitter, twisted and miserable and suddenly heaven comes to earth and you are now surrounded by pure, delight-filled joy?

The question is . . . would that be Heaven for you?

How would you feel if you are living with unforgiveness against someone or some place like church or work, and you are determined you will not forgive?

How would you feel if suddenly Heaven invades earth and you are now confronted by the one who has forgiven all, the one who is pure and filled with forgiveness?

Would that be Heaven for you?

How would you feel if you are stingy and tight and you are not compassionate and generous and suddenly you are in the presence of pure unadulterated generosity?

Would that be Heaven for you?

How would you feel if you are racist or you have prejudiced feelings against people with other political preferences, lifestyles, skin color, or other differences and suddenly you are surrounded with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation? As you sit at the great banquet table and you are now a minority, will that be heaven for you? Or, do you feel that would be hell?

What I am asking here is, is it possible that for some heaven will maybe be worse than hell?

We have this fanciful belief that when we get to heaven a magic switch takes place and what we were *not* on earth, we will suddenly *be* in heaven. That although we have been bitter, unforgiving, stingy, and prejudiced on earth, we will suddenly change and we will be OK. That thought makes the Bible and the teachings of Jesus irrelevant.

You see that kind of thinking goes against all the teaching of the Bible, which is seeking to teach us how to be a different kind of people in preparation for Heaven.

Jesus' entire project in teaching His disciples was to show them how to live the life of Heaven in the here and now.

My mentor John Philips said, "You know, John, what happens on earth has more to do with Heaven than it does earth." His favorite saying was, "we are in training for reigning..."

Randy Alcorn in his excellent book called *Heaven* said, "Through adversity and opportunity we are being groomed for our leadership roles in Christ's eternal Kingdom".

## **Heaven on Earth**

The other thing that we have to grasp as we look at the subject of eternity is that Heaven is more down to earth than we may have realized.

Christians have this thought of one day going to Heaven when, according to the Scripture, Heaven is coming to earth. Eternity will not be all Hell breaking loose, but all Heaven breaking loose.

Turn to Revelation 21:1-4...

***"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"***

So the picture is of Heaven coming to earth which also ties to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:5,  
***"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."***

John 14:17-18... ***"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."***

The Prophet Zechariah prophesied about Christ's return and said in Zechariah 14:4, ***"On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem..."*** That's where Jesus went up to Heaven from, and look what the Angel said that confirms the prophet's words in Acts 1:11, ***"Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."***

The thought is: same way...same place. Jesus will one day touch down on the Mount of Olives. He is coming back to earth.

Some believe He will set up His Kingdom for a thousand years, then we will all be leaving for Heaven.

I believe that Heaven is coming to earth, that whole universe all the planets will be renewed and be populated. I believe Jerusalem will be the center of the universe, and God shall reign forever. I don't have much time to time to go into all that, but it's all very interesting and wonderful.

When I have talked to some people about eternity it seems to me what they are looking and waiting for is "church forever", and inside I think (not wanting to be unspiritual), ***"Church forever...that's it? What's the Good News?"***

What if God is going to not only redeem people from Satan's grasp, but is also going to redeem this old world? This old world corrupted by the fall of man into sin. This old world ruined by greed and mismanagement. This old world ruined by crime and evil. This old world ruined by injustice and prejudice.

Not only is God redeeming people, but redeeming this world. This planet is going to be not only taken back from Satan, but also restored to its intended glory.

And what if God has intentions to have this earth ruled and run without corruption and evil greed? What if he intends to suck the injustice, prejudice and religious factions of out it? What if it's His plan to show us the world as it was intended to be before Satan got a hold of it?

What if He wants to change you and me in this life so that we can be one of the leaders – one of those He uses in a perfect world? What if everything that happens to us down here in the seventy or eighty years of our life are all intended by God to get us ready to rule and reign in the never-ending next life?

What if He is trying to change us here so that we will be ready for what He has in store for us in the next life?

The Apostle Paul gives a glimpse into all this. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, ***"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels?"***

So with all this in mind realizing that God has big plans not only in this life but in fact He is working on us right here and now for a big plan He has for each of us to play out in eternity.

The Apostle Peter asks us this question in 2 Peter 3:11-14, ***“What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”***

Now I don't want to lead you to feel that we are going to be saved according to our performance, the only way to Heaven is by grace, and that, according to the Scripture, is a free gift from God to everyone who will receive it. Eternity is so much more than just getting there. God has so many plans for every one of our lives, but we have to decide to allow Him down here, right here and now, to get us ready for what He has planned.

Listen to this verse, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, ***“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”***

I want to finish this morning with this thought...

#### **Light Now or Light Tomorrow.**

Bear with a few more Scriptures here...

Revelation 22:5, ***“There will be no more night . They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.”***

1 Corinthians 4:5, ***“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.”***

Luke 12:2-3, ***“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”***

One of the first things that will happen when Heaven invades earth is that a search light will reveal every hidden thing.

Light reveals. Light exposes hidden things. Light reveals motives.

Now we have this picture of the end times and of doom and judgment, and think God is going to come with this big list of all we have done wrong. That is not what God wants to do! We are a million miles from the truth if we think that...God is not looking for bad; He is looking for good. He is looking for things He can praise us for. And for the good, bad and the ugly to be revealed, all God has to do is show up.

God is Light and whenever you allow Him near you, you become aware of the areas in your life that you know would not please Him.

Isaiah had a vision of God showing and filling His temple with his presence. This is what Isaiah said when God just showed up in Isaiah 6:5, ***"I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."***

Peter had fished all night and caught nothing, you remember the story, and here was this Carpenter trying to tell Him how to catch fish. He argued a bit but did as Jesus told him and threw his nets the other side of the boat, and he caught so many fish that he had to call for help to bring them in. In that moment, Peter caught a glimpse of who Jesus really was, God in the flesh. Look at what the Bible says Peter said and did in Luke 5:8, ***"he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"***

God is pure truth, unfiltered light, and the Bible says when He comes to earth every toxic, evil thing in our lives will be shown up.

Now here is the desire of Jesus for you and me: He wants us to allow the light of God to deal with us now before He comes back.

He wants us to allow God to come close to us now and by His presence show us areas of our lives that we need to deal with now so that things will not be shown up on the day when Heaven invades earth.

He wants us to live our lives now with the thought, "EVERYTHING I DO MATTERS". He wants us to live our lives in such a way that when God's light suddenly shines there will be nothing that we will be embarrassed, terrified or ashamed of.

You know I can hardly go anywhere these days where someone doesn't know me. I can be out walking or shopping and someone comes up and says, "Hi John!" or if they are religious, "Hi Pastor King!"

I have this awareness wherever I am these days, someone who knows me could be watching me right now and I am usually right – you lot turn up everywhere! I have been in so many restaurants where I suddenly find out the waiter or waitress is someone from this church and I have to tip well! Did you know our church runs Olive Garden? Oh, and most of the Starbucks stores too! I always have to be nice and polite, and I am not complaining friends, it is a great aid to holy living!

I remember being in among a group of people who had got into talking about someone who was not there at that particular moment and what the group were saying was not very positive about this person.

Different people were saying different things, and one guy who had said nothing was asked what he thought. And in a very un-condemning way he simply said, "I am sorry but I am not feeling comfortable right now. I don't think I can be a part of this conversation. I have this conviction about not talking negatively about someone when they are not here to hear what's said and have a chance to defend themselves."

Wow, talk about a show-stopper. We never felt condemned, we felt convicted by the way the guy said this and knew the light in him shined up our wrong. From that moment we stopped the gossip. (I mean negative talk!)

Light shows up the dark, evil spots. I would rather have the wrong in me shown up here than on that day. God wants us to invite this light-filled presence into our lives so that we are aware all the time, wherever we are, that He is there.

The Apostle John said we should live our lives walking in the light in 1 John 1:7, ***“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”***

As you get close to Him and as you allow His light in, His light purifies us. We are talking of a God who really loves us. We are talking about a God who wants the best for us. We are talking about a God who wants to shine in us and through us so that on Judgment Day there will be nothing to expose or reveal.

We are not talking about trying to be better; we are talking about walking in the light, getting closer to the light and of allowing God into our lives to clean us up. We are talking about a close walk with God and heaven coming to earth through us, and this old world seeing a bit of Heaven through us.

### **Conclusion**

While I was preparing this, I had mail come that asked, "Are You Prepared?"

It wasn't talking about Heaven; it was talking about retirement and pension. Isn't it amazing that we prepare for so many things, but spend so little thought about preparing for eternity?

Before you begin to wave your hand in the air and shout "Oh I am prepared, John. I have asked Jesus into my life!", let me remind you that coming to Christ was never intended to be the end of your preparation, it was only the beginning. The preparation goes on until Jesus comes or we are taken to Heaven. Some people have never allowed Jesus to change them from the day they have come to know Him.

All I want you to do today is to say, "Jesus, shine your light into me now. Show me areas that need to change and give me the power to change."

For some of you this will be the beginning of the journey and for others it will be a re-start, or a recommitment to the changing power of Jesus.

Let's Pray.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® unless otherwise noted.  
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