

Who Will Be In Heaven?
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Good Morning!

Our lesson for today is the final of four lessons on the subject, "In My Father's House."

The first two lessons considered our individual, unique identity and journey from birth throughout all eternity. The "YOU" that embarked on this earthly life, will be the "YOU" that exists for all eternity.

Last week's lesson considered the question, "What if I miss Heaven?" We presented a dramatic description of what awaits a person who makes the choice to live apart from God. It is dismal beyond imagination. Ever-lasting punishment and separation from God.

Today we'll ask and answer the question, "Who will be in Heaven?" Heaven will be joy beyond measure. Everlasting life with God. Unspeakable glory and rest for the weary.

Heaven will become the home of the faithful men and women of all ages when Christ returns to take them to His Father's House. Heaven will become the home of little ones who were taken from this life before they grew to know right from wrong.

Let's read Psalm 139:13-16. Not only is this passage one of the greatest reasons to abhor abortion, but it also marks the point of each of our individual beginnings.

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought while still in the womb. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."

We sing a Hymn titled "All The Way My Savior Leads Me." The lyrics begin, "All the way my Savior leads me. What have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His faithful mercies? Who through life has been my guide?"

And then, in conclusion, "Perfect rest with Me is promised in my Father's house above. When my spirit clothed immortal wings its flight through the realms of the day; this my song through endless ages, 'Jesus led me all the way.'"

We, like Jesus, were formed in the womb. If we desire to be among the saved, we will be about our Father's business when we reach an accountable age, just as Jesus chose to be doing.

We don't often think too often about Jesus as a young boy, as a child. The Bible reveals little concerning this. However, we have a couple of scriptures that shed some light.

In Isaiah 7:14-16 there is reference to the relatively short span of time between Jesus' birth and when He reached an accountable age. "The Son born to a virgin, Immanuel, will eat soft foods until He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good."

In Luke 2:42-52 Jesus went with His family to Jerusalem for the Passover. He was twelve years old at the time. On their way home, Joseph and Mary noticed that Jesus was not among the relatives. They returned to Jerusalem and looked for Jesus for three whole days. Finally, they found Him in the Temple, teaching. Mary said, "Don't you know how anxious we've been?" And Jesus said "I was tending to My Father's business." Verse 52 adds, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

As Jesus grew from childhood, He came to understand how to choose good over evil, and began to be about the business of serving the Father in Heaven. This is exactly what you and I ought to do.

Everyone begins life the same as Jesus, but not everyone chooses to walk in His footsteps. Those who reject His pathway until death, have chosen to suffer with the Rich man in Hades awaiting the judgment and sentencing to Hell.

Those who allow Jesus to lead them through life and into death, have chosen to rest in comfort at Abraham's side in Hades. There they await the resurrection and the reward of eternal life.

Like they say. "What's it gonna be?" We even have a hymn that asks, "What will your answer be?"

"Someday you'll stand at the bar on high, someday your record you'll see; someday you'll answer the question of life, what will your answer be? Sadly you'll stand if you're unprepared, trembling you'll fall on your knee; facing the sentence of life or of death, what will that sentence be? Now is the time to prepare my friend, make your soul spotless and free; washed in the blood of the crucified One, He will your answer be. What will it be? What will it be? Where will you spend eternity? What will it be, o what will it be? What will your answer be?"

I know that each and every one here today would much rather be singing the words of "On Zion's Glorious Summit."

"On Zion's glorious summit stood a numerous host redeemed by blood! They hymned their king in strains divine; I heard the song and strove to join. Here all who suffered sword or flame for truth, for Jesus' lovely name, shout victory now and hail the Lamb, and bow before the great I AM. While everlasting ages roll, eternal love shall feast their soul, and scenes of bliss, forever new, rise in succession to their view.

When John the Baptist heralded the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus continued to lead the way in fulfilling all righteousness. He led the way through baptism. As the obedient Son rose up from the water burial, the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven and rested upon Him in the form of a Dove. The Father spoke from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

This is certainly how we want to be seen by the Father: "Well pleasing." Think about this if you are of an age where you know baptism is the right thing to do, the necessary thing to do, but have put it off.

Those who desire to go to Heaven, must first follow Jesus in choosing to serve God, and then follow Jesus in submitting to baptism.

We know that baptism saves us. 1 Peter 3:21 says so plainly. We know that baptism forgives sin. Acts 2:38 says so plainly. Like the children's song, "How do I know? The Bible tells me so!"

Jesus lived a life without sin. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Christ was tempted as we are, and yet was without sin. He lived a life like ours, yet none of His experience was tainted with sin! Jesus never yielded to temptation.

But we do, we sin, even though we try not to. 1 Corinthians 10:12-14 warns us not to get so full of ourselves that we don't realize that we can fall into sin. However, the good news is that God can and will lead us through. Have the commitment to stay as far from sin as you can, and the confidence that God will hold your hand. Furthermore, if you slip God will forgive you if you repent and pray.

"All the way My Savior leads Me."

So many hymns come flooding in when I write a lesson! "Yield Not To Temptation." "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin; each victory will help you some other to win. Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue, look ever to Jesus, He will carry you through.

As Christians, as baptized believers, the blood of Christ not only washes away our past sins but it also continues to forgive repented sins on our walk with Christ. 1 John 1:7-9 says, "If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins (and pray for forgiveness), He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Much of what we've talked about so far this morning is not meant to be an overview of the Gospel. Although it is in some ways. Rather it is intended to remind us of what it takes to approach death as one of the faithful. We strive to have the same confidence that the Apostle Paul had as the end of our life approaches. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 says, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

"I HAVE; I HAVE; I HAVE; THERE IS; WILL GIVE."

You and I can have that very same confidence in falling asleep in Jesus.

Those who sleep in Jesus are those who, at death, are carried away to rest at Abraham's side in Hades. Just as the beggar Lazarus was in Luke 16:22. Those who are asleep in Jesus rest in blessed hope.

Remember what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14? "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."

Where did Jesus go when He was crucified on the Cross? We know where His mangled body went. It was placed in a new rock tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. That was just before sunset on Friday.

But where did Jesus go? He went to Hades. As He told the repentant thief that was crucified alongside Him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Jesus did not go to Heaven that Friday. He would not ascend back to the Father for another 43 days. No. He went to Hades.

David prophesied about 1000 years earlier that the Father would not allow Jesus (His Soul) to remain in Hades nor allow His body to decompose in the tomb. In Psalm 16:8-11, we see Jesus resting in hope, in Hades, while His body was in the tomb, confidently knowing that the Father would not leave Him there.

Recall that Jesus had told his Disciples, in Matthew 16:18, that the "Gates of Hades" would not prevent Him from rising and building His Church?

Peter, in his sermon on Pentecost, pointed out that David's prophecy had been fulfilled. The Father had brought Him back from Hades and had raised His body from the tomb.

Acts 2:29-32, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses."

Because Jesus was raised and has returned to the Father, we can rest in Hades with the same hope. The faithful may be at peace alongside Abraham (God's family). Yet that peace, that Paradise, is far from the blessed glory of Heaven.

When Peter preached this first Gospel sermon, it was 53 days after Jesus was crucified, 50 days after His resurrection, and 10 days after His ascension back to the Father. Jesus was on His throne. Again, just as David prophesied, in Psalm 2:6-7, God speaking, "Yet have I set My King on the Holy Hill of Zion. This day I have begotten you from the Grave."

Just as Jesus was begotten from the grave as our forerunner, we too can be raised up to live forever with Him and the Father.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

If the "YOU" that was formed in your mother's womb, grew to be the "YOU" that chose to follow Jesus through baptism and faithful living, then that will be the "YOU" that will rest with Abraham in Hades when your body dies, and will be the "YOU" that will be called back to life in hope, and will be the "You" that Christ will take Home with Him to Heaven."

Who will be in Heaven? That's who ... will be in Heaven.

Knowing what awaits both the just and the unjust, then, as Peter asked, what manner of men and women ought we to be?

Thank you for your kind attention.

Invitation

We will now extend the invitation of Christ to become a child of God in baptism, raised up, begotten; having your sins washed away. The baptistry is ready.

1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

This is also an opportunity for us to pray with you if you have fallen away and need to return to God in repentance and prayer.

Everything God has promised is true. A living hope guaranteed by the resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the first and only one to be raised from the dead, never again to die. Don't you want to follow Him?

If we can assist you, please come forward and occupy a seat up front while together we sing a hymn of invitation and encouragement.