



Discussions with My Friend: An Introduction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ By David Stewart

Chapter 41: Scriptural Teachings on Heaven

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Many acquaintances have told me that they think they would be happy going somewhere other than heaven. They express that they would rather do their own thing here on the earth and go to a place which is not perfect but is still good, than to put forth all the effort that is necessary to comply with Christ's teachings. They rationalize that as long as they are "good people," God will be merciful to them, even if they may attend church only irregularly and devote their time and resources to their own interests rather than to God's work.

To a great extent, such views reflect the false teaching of sectarian Christianity. Generations have been told by unauthorized ministers that they can achieve salvation without sanctification and blessings without sacrifice through the merits of Christ's grace without making the personal effort to love Him and keep His commandments. Heaven is also conceived as a boring place, with angels sitting on clouds playing harps. The excitement, it seems, is all in the other place.

Scriptural teachings of heaven can help us to appreciate the importance of following God's will on the earth. In mortality, we have only very limited information from which to make decisions. In the afterlife, we will see much more than that which is apparent to us upon the earth. Just as a baby may be entertained by a spinning butterfly mobile which is not interesting to older children, and as children play with toys that are adults do not desire, in the resurrection we will recognize that the things that many sought during their time on earth -- money, fame, prestige, and entertainment -- are mere trivialities compared to the riches of eternity. In the day of judgment, the eternal reward Christ offers will be desired by all. Many will come to Him in that day and say: "Lord, Lord, open to us" ([Matthew 25:11](#)), but those who do not know him would be turned away.

The afterlife includes more than the mere binary sort between heaven and hell taught by sectarian Christianity. Christ taught: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" ([John 14:2](#)).

We learn from the Apostle Paul that the eternal state of the righteous and the disobedient. Of the resurrection, he wrote:

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ([1 Cor. 15:40-44](#)) //

The glory of the faithful who keep God's commandments is compared to the glory of the sun, which is so bright that the moon and stars cannot be seen by day. The glory of those who are honorable people but are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus is compared to the glory of the moon, which is brighter than many the stars but pales in comparison to the sun. The glory of those who disobey major commandments and live without honor is compared to the faint and distant glory of stars. These are not small differences, but are separated by many orders of magnitude. Nor are these kingdoms all homogenous: just as stars differ from another in glory, so too will some people receive greater or lesser rewards within these general categories. The faithful believer will receive a far greater eternal reward than the person who follows Christ only when it is convenient.

The righteous will be resurrected at Christ's Second Coming, and will live with Christ on the earth for a thousand years during the millennium. John wrote in Revelation:

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years ([Revelation 20:5-6](#)).

Mortality is brief, and the duration of eternity also demonstrates to thoughtful people the importance of preparing for the world to

come. Eternal treasures are not dimmed by time. Christ taught: "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" ([Matthew 6:20](#)). He further promised that earthly sacrifices would be more than made up to faithful believers: "every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" ([Matthew 19:29](#)).

Visions of families and friends reuniting in the afterlife, which seem to have been commonly believed from earliest times as preserved in ancient Egyptian funerary texts down to the present day, are correct, at least as far as the righteous are concerned. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord declares: "That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" ([D&C 130:2](#)).

Other scriptures provide us a brief glimpse of heaven. Joseph Smith wrote of his vision of the celestial kingdom:

I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire;

Also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son.

I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold. ([D&C 137:2-4](#))

Regarding the eternal state of the righteous, he further recorded:

Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

And they shall overcome all things.

Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical." ([D&C 76:60-70](#))

The righteous will continue to learn from eternity to eternity:

The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth;

But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.

The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim.

This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ's.

Then the white stone mentioned in [Revelation 2:17](#), will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known.

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. ([D&C 130:6-10, 18-19](#))

Scriptures still provide us with only a glimpse of heaven, but that which we do know demonstrates compellingly that the eternal rewards available to the righteous through Christ's grace are far beyond that which our own efforts could merit, and that God's greatest gift of eternal life is merits our best mortal strivings.