

THREE GREAT APPEALS OF HEAVEN

Occasionally, someone may criticize the desire to go to heaven as a reason to obey God. Considering the great appeal of heaven, it is a little bit hard to conceive anyone would offer such criticism. Sure, there are other reasons to obey God, such as loving Him. But one does not have to denigrate the desire to be in heaven in order to emphasize obeying him out of love. This writer does not apologize at all for saying one reason I seek to obey God is because I want to be in that beautiful land of rest and peace. Consider with me three of the strongest draws to land one's bark on the lasting and peaceful heavenly shore: the saved will be in the presence of God, the purity of heaven, and the permanence of its blessings.

The presence of God. As we tread the terrain of this temporal ball called earth, it has pitfalls and difficult ground to traverse. Yet, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who adore His person and keep His commands (1 Pet. 3:12). It is human nature for one to seek to be in the presence of a benefactor. God gives us every good and perfect gift (Jam. 1:17). God has bestowed upon us the very gift that makes it possible for us to reside in the eternal abode of the soul, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Having given us His inspired revelation, God makes it possible for us to know how to please Him in life so as to be with Him when life here is over. There is not one single thing we need while in this fleeting body of flesh, whether a spiritual or temporal blessing, that God has not provided. Who would not want to live forever in the presence of the greatest of all Giver of gifts, our heavenly Father? *"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"* (Rev. 21:22,23). There is where I want to spend eternity. Don't you?

The purity of the place. In this world, we live amongst murderers, thieves, and workers of all kinds of evil. Every day the news is replete with stories of violence and corruption. Only this morning we heard of a group of kids in Florida who set a boy on fire in a squabble over a video game. There are killings in the street, victims dying at assailants' feet. The moral laws of God are laughed at and disdained by millions who deny His very existence, and who rebuff the measureless power able to discern the one fallen sparrow among the millions remaining in flight. The godless heap mounds of ridicule upon those who walk in, and who would have others walk in, the beauty of holiness. It shall not so be in heaven. *"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Rev. 21:27). To live in a land where there is not a single lie told or even one harsh word spoken is beyond the ability of man to perceive, but that is how heaven will be. There is where I want to spend eternity. Don't you?

The permanence of its blessings. Who can count on men, in whose favor one may find himself today and eliminated from tomorrow? Not infrequently, people are promised certain things one day only to have them removed on the next. Fickle men are compassionate and helpful one day and for no apparent cause, distant and unkind the next. *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even*

so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). That lofty verse, we refer to as the golden rule, is applied inconsistently at best. God is **not** inconsistent, and He has built an everlasting home for us where His blessings will always be present. In this life we have brief periods of laughter over good things followed by a river of tears over calamitous and sorrowful losses. Joy is interrupted by the loss of loved ones to the indiscriminate hand of death. *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

I, and perhaps you, have heard of those who applied for a mortgage loan and were told they had been approved, but later were told, "We are sorry, there was a mistake, and the approval has been withdrawn." It will not be like that in heaven. When God promises us that there will be no night in heaven, there will never be darkness there. When God tells us life in heaven is eternal, there will never be an about face on God's part wherein suddenly death invades that realm. The blessings are permanent. Paul wrote, *"For the gifts and calling of God, are without repentance"* (Rom. 11:29).

In heaven, we will be in the presence of the Godhead and all of those from this world who loved Him and kept His commandments. Unlike the earth, heaven will be pure. None of us are without sin while we live in this life, but we will be in heaven. None of the wickedness so prevalent here will ever be in heaven. What will be in heaven, though, will be all of the things that God has promised us through His only begotten Son, and those who walked with Him, and were called by Him, to be His apostles. Those men were sent to teach and preach the things revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. Among those things were those which describe the permanence and everlasting beauty and peace that will be our eternal home. We are just passing through in this life, and it has its ups and downs. Heaven will be forever, and will forever be immune from anything that could take away from its perfection. That is where I want to be in eternity. Don't You?

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