

What Will We Do in Heaven? - Part 2

Revelation 22, Philippians 1, Ephesians 3

Slide 1

Last week we began to look at what we'll do in heaven. We learned that we'll engage in service, we'll be served, we'll worship, and most importantly, we'll see God.

Today we're going to look at the last four. The first three are occupations, but the fourth isn't, because it's rest.

So, the next thing we'll do in heaven is reign. We'll reign.

Slide 2

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. And they will reign for ever and ever."*

Not only does John tell us in this verse that we, as the saints of God, will reign with Christ forever and ever, but Jesus Himself, in some of His parables, speaks of how He'll assign authority and responsibility to His servants at His return.

Jesus' teaching in Revelation, and various other passages of Scripture, gives us the impression that God will operate His eternal kingdom in a similar way that He operates His kingdom now through the church.

I mean that God, by His Spirit, has gifted the church with individuals who have particular gifts.

Now, all of us are gifted in some way, but not all can serve the church as deacons, not all can preach, teach, administer, prophesy and so on.

We all have different spiritual gifts for the purpose of administering the kingdom of God through the church.

Likewise, God will delegate heaven's operation to His own people. In other words, there will be a sphere of responsibility and authority in God's kingdom.

Right away, that shows how foolish any idea of anti-authoritarianism may be. Many people balk at any authority, but authority is not something that's going to be abolished.

Authority is something that God ordained before the fall, and something that'll move on into eternity.

Now the difference between heaven's responsibility and the levels of authority that are gifted to men and women in the church is simply that we'll never fail in the delegated responsibilities that God gives us.

There's not only a difference between the 'now' and the 'then' regarding reigning, but there's also a relevance to the 'now' when we contemplate the 'then.'

What am I talking about? Well, in the New Testament we find that authority and faithfulness are inseparably and eternally linked.

The authority that God gives any of us is relevant to our faithfulness in His service. The same will be the case in heaven. Our reigning is relative to our faithfulness now. To emphasize this, turn to Matthew 25:14.

Matthew 25:14-29, "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more.

So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

"Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.'"

In this parable, we see what happened to the servant that just buried his talents and didn't make any money out of it. This has more of a significance than simply just the millennial reign.

Verses 29b-30: *"For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

What Jesus is teaching, and what's relevant to us, is that our authority in the eternal state, as well as in the millennial kingdom, is relative to our faithfulness in the responsibilities that God has given us here on earth in the church.

That's sobering. It's also relative to the service in which we're currently engaged. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12, *"If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us."*

So, the more responsible and faithful we are in the face of adamant persecution, the more responsible in authority we'll be in glory.

The responsibility that we're given, and our faithfulness in it, is related directly to how we'll reign with Christ.

Do you ever think: *"I wonder what responsibility I'll have in heaven?"* or *"I wonder what I'll be doing, where I'll be reigning, and what authority I'll have?"*

In one sense we don't need to wonder about it. We don't need to speculate or even wait, because theoretically what we're doing now, or what we're not doing now, will determine what we'll do then!

Think of it. Our life, that we live today, and in our history of existence, is putting into Christ's mouth word-by-word what He'll say to us on the day He judges us.

That's one reason we need to meditate and anticipate heaven, because our love affair with this world system is robbing us of our heavenly reward.

The world that we love with all its materialism and affluence is robbing us of what we could know in heaven one day. If only the earth down here wasn't so big and so bright.

We need to get a perspective like Paul, when he said at the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

I know he was an apostle, but did he have a hot line to heaven to know that he was going to get his crown and his reward?

Of course he didn't! He knew he would reap his reward because of the life that he sowed while on this earth. That's how he knew! And we can know the same.

George Whitefield, the evangelist, said: *“O could I always live for eternity, preach for eternity, pray for eternity and speak for eternity. I want to see God only!”* That was his desire!

If we do that, Jesus will say to us, as He said in Luke 12:43-44, *“It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”* Isn't that amazing?

How will we reign? Well, I don't really know. C. S. Lewis suggests we'll govern a distant star.

Now, I don't know about that, but I'm pretty sure, from the Word of God, that we'll reign by serving others, and serving the Servant King forever.

Slide 3

Next, we're going to learn in heaven. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, *“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.”*

There's no suggestion whatsoever in the whole of the Bible that we're going to know everything. I think that's a common misconception that people have.

In fact, if you remember, when we looked in Revelation 6:10, the souls of the martyrs under the altar were crying unto God for vengeance and saying, “How *long?*”

They didn't know how long it was going to be until they were avenged of the righteous blood.

We've got to realize that not knowing everything is not a flaw. That's what it is to be human and not be God.

So, it's foolish for us to think that in heaven we're going to know everything, because if we knew everything that would make us God. Omniscience, to be all-knowing, is a divine attribute.

In heaven there's an awful lot of learning that we're going to have to do. I believe Jesus, as He trained His disciples down here on earth, will be our instructor in heaven.

He'll teach us and lead us into further light and truth. You might say, “*Well, what will He teach us?*” Probably He'll teach us things regarding the new heaven and the new earth.

But I believe the primary lesson that He'll teach us is: To love the Lord our God as we have never loved Him before! I believe He's going to teach us more about God and His inexhaustible grace!

In Ephesians 2:6-7, Paul says, “*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*”

That word '*show*' in verse 7 literally means '*reveal*.' It says that there's going to be an eternal revelation of God's grace toward us.

Christ and the Spirit are going to continually unravel the wonders of eternal salvation and there will not be enough time in all eternity to do this.

Ephesians 3:18-19 tells us that Paul's desire is that we: *“May have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*

You see, we're going to find out that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in God. That God is even greater than eternity. Learning of Him will exhaust all the time and energies that we'll have.

As Jonathan Edwards put it: *“There will never be a time when there is no more glory for the redeemed to discover and enjoy. We will never stop learning about God, and never stop learning about the wonder of God's grace.”*

God invented learning, just like He did work and thinking. Intellectual curiosity isn't part of the curse that came upon us through the fall of mankind. God put curiosity in our hearts.

The Bible even says of Jesus that *“He learned, and He grew in knowledge.”* There's a God-intended pleasure in learning and God's going to permit us to partake in it for all eternity.

Martin Luther understood this, because he said: *“If God had all the answers in His right-hand, and the struggle to reach them in His left hand, I would choose His left hand.”*

Now why did he say that? Did he want to know all the answers? No. He said it because he understood the pleasure in learning, the pleasure in discovering, the pleasure in finding things out, the pleasure of being led by God.

I think it's clear that we'll learn in heaven, so why not start down here? Learn about God, about eternity, about heaven as your home. The implication of this is that we'll carry whatever we've learned down here into eternity.

Banish the idea that *"It doesn't matter what I do here now, everything will be alright in the end."* Isn't that the way we think about heaven? That may be correct in one sense, but that's merely a notion that down here doesn't matter.

But, as we contemplate heaven in the New Testament, we find that this is the exact opposite. Down here does matter. It matters immensely to what up there will be like for us!

The common thread, throughout all of this truth on heaven, is that 'now' relates to 'then.'

So, we'll reign, we'll learn, and seventhly... there will be fellowship.

Slide 4

Hebrews 12:22-24 tells us, *"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."*

Whatever way you interpret those verses, there's going to be a lot of people in heaven, and a lot of creatures too. There's going to be great fellowship.

No wonder heaven will be a place of never-ending learning, just getting to know everyone will take all eternity!

Now there are many passages in the New Testament which speak of the final fellowship that all believers will have in heaven.

All of them point towards this truth: that we'll forever interact with, as Revelation 7 says, "*A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language...*"

It's worth mentioning that it'd be ridiculous to fellowship with all these people if you didn't know them or recognize them.

Now here's another challenge. Remember the 'then' relates to the 'now,' and the 'now' to the 'then?'

How are you fellowshiping with your brothers and sisters in Christ down here? Why don't we practice some of this heavenly unity of fellowship here on earth?

Our problem is that we've made the mistake of believing that unity equals uniformity. That's not true. There's going to be diversity in heaven. What did Revelation say: "*from every nation, tribe, people and language...*"

Slide 5

The last point is this: we'll rest in heaven. Praise God! Revelation 14:13, "*Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*"

When we go to the beginning of the Bible, we find that the "rest principle" is enshrined in the Sabbath principle. Incidentally, that principle was put into place before the fall. God rested, and we're to rest.

After the fall that same "rest principle" is found in the law of Moses, and in the practices of the nation of Israel.

The Bible says in Hebrews that there is a rest now appointed unto the children of God in the church, and Revelation affirms this by telling us that there'll be a rest in heaven.

Now, we know from what we've learned, that the rest we'll experience in heaven is not due to the absence of work. We'll work, we'll serve, we'll learn, etc. We'll do all sorts of things in heaven.

But it's a rest like that which was in Eden. In Eden, there was plenty to do. There was responsibility and authority given to Adam and Eve, but they also had rest.

The work we'll do in heaven will not exhaust our energies. I can't explain it all, but when we labor and serve the Lord, our energies will continually be replenished.

In other words, we'll never grow tired or weary. We'll be busier than we've ever been, and yet we'll be more rested than we've ever been.

Isn't that perfect? We'll not be lounging around all day, we'll be working and resting, working and resting. You might ask: *"Why do you need to rest if you don't grow tired?"*

Look at Revelation 14:11, this passage contrasts those who are in hell: *"And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name."*

That tells us something of the type of rest that this is, it's the opposite to the unrest that is in hell.

Jesus, in Matthew 11:28-29, said: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Do you know what this rest is? It’s the absolute contrast to all the unrest that we find in this life!

Hebrews says there’s a rest appointed unto the people of God and, though we can experience this by faith now in our hearts, one day we're going to realize it in heaven with all our faculties.

What causes you toil? What causes you pain? What causes you unrest, turmoil of mind and heart? Is it disease, illness, weakness of mind, of emotion? Is it separation, is it bereavement?

Praise God, we can enter by faith into a spiritual reality of this rest and peace now, but even when we do that, not all the remnants of the fall can be erased, but they’ll be in that perfect rest.

Needless to say, that's why endless litanies and laborious rites of different religions to achieve rest for the dead is all pointless.

Praying for the dead, baptizing the dead, even saying, “May he rest in peace” is senseless. If a man or woman rests in Christ, they couldn't rest in any more peace!

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father, wondering as she looked up to the stars, she exclaimed: *'Oh Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be like?'*

I know you’d like a good rest down here, but just think what that rest will be like up there!

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Conclusion

Richard Baxter, in his book, *'The Saints Everlasting Rest,'* writes: *“O blessed day, when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing and praising, when my perfect soul and body together shall in these perfect things perfectly enjoy the most perfect God when God also who is love itself shall perfectly love me, and I shall rest in His love as I shall rest in my love to Him and rejoice with joy and singing as I shall rejoice in Him.”*

Do you think he got a glimpse of glory? I hope you've started to think about heaven, or at the least, these messages have caused you to imagine heaven, so that your imagination might give way to anticipation, and the joy of the Lord might spread in your heart.

Let us not miss heaven for the sight of earth. May it make a lasting difference to our lives now and our lives to come.