



Heavenly Misconceptions

by Sean Kilgo



THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE CHRISTIAN IS THE GREATEST AND MOST COMFORTING PROMISE OUR LORD HAS GIVEN TO US. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN AND WHAT THIS PROMISE MEANS TO US.



(1) **She's an angel now.**

One of the most common misperceptions regarding heaven is that when we die we become angels. It's not entirely clear how many people actually believe this or if it's just said to be nice when you're not sure what else to say, but one thing's clear: It's not the biblical teaching about our death.

The most important thing to remember is that angels and humans are two separate and distinct parts of our Lord's creation. We see this particularly in Genesis 1, where we learn that it is only man that is created in the image of God and given the particular duties of caring for creation. Moreover, Jesus, in His

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incarnation, does not become an angel or any other creature; He becomes a man. Christ's work in the Incarnation is even set up as distinguishing man and angels; in Hebrews 2, we're told that it's not angels that Jesus helps but the offspring of Abraham. We also see in the pictures of heaven, especially in Revelation, that there are both angels and people before the throne of God, worshiping Him.

Angels and humans are different, and that's a good thing. We can take comfort in not being angels, for in our humanity Christ is our Savior, Redeemer and Brother.

(2) What color will the grass be?

We have many questions in this life, especially questions that relate to theology and spiritual things. There are, unfortunately, a number of these questions that we simply cannot answer (and should not try to answer), since God's Word does not provide the answer for us.

This can be frustrating at times. But we do have the promise that in the resurrection of all flesh, we will have the full knowledge we were meant to have. St. Paul tells us that currently we see in a mirror dimly and that we only know in part, but when the Resurrection occurs, we will be face to face with God and will know fully even as we have been fully known (1 COR. 13:12). This doesn't necessarily mean that we will have answers to every question we've ever wondered about; there are likely questions that will no longer matter to us or are no longer important. We simply know that everything our Lord desires us to know, we will know fully.

(3) I'm but a stranger here. Heaven is my home.

Are you familiar with this hymn? The concept is that when we die, we go to heaven and that's it; that's the end. But heaven isn't actually our

final destination. Yes, we know that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (JOHN 14), that God has prepared for us a heavenly city and country (HEBREWS 11) and that we have citizenship in heaven (PHIL. 3:20), but all of this, including the hymn, is in the context of the Resurrection.

Jesus tells us that He will prepare a place for us and then come back for us, and Paul continues on in Philippians to tell us that Jesus will "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." Also, St. Peter tells us that in our waiting for the day of the Lord (the Resurrection), we are also waiting for the creation of the new heavens and the new earth (2 PETER 3:13).

In St. John's Revelation, we're given the promise that Jesus will give us to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God (REV. 2:7). This is the same tree, in Genesis, next to which God sets an angel and flaming sword, so that Adam and Eve would not eat from the tree and live forever (GEN. 3:22-24).

While the soul of the Christian is certainly at peace upon his death, this is not yet the fulfillment of our Lord's great promise of raising our bodies to be imperishable and immortal (1 CORINTHIANS 15) and that we will be clothed with our heavenly dwelling and that "what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 COR. 5:4).

The promises that our Lord gives to us about life eternal are indeed great and wonderful, but they are even more so, and immensely more comforting, when we understand them better. May the Lord, in His mercy, grant that we would always hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life. LW

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