

Chapter 4 The Kingdom of Heaven

Another subject closely related to this pernicious doctrine of eternal damnation and torture, is the concept that when we die, we go to “heaven” or “hell.” Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and declared that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the one and only such event in all the history of the world. Read carefully what he said and the implications contained in his words.

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Acts 2:29.

And later he says,

For David is **not ascended** into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord..... Acts 2:34,35.

Peter was stressing the importance of the fact that only Jesus had been raised from the dead. In Paul’s writings he points out that we shall have to wait for the resurrection before we are changed and raised from the grave. Those who have died before us shall be raised first and then we who are alive shall join them AT THE LAST TRUMP. Job put it this way,

[25]For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the Latter day upon the earth [26]and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Job 19:25,26

Job said he would stand in his flesh AT THE LATTER DAY. When you die, you don’t go to “heaven” or “hell,” you go to the grave and there remain until the time of the resurrection. Once again the writings of Paul have been *wrested* and made to say something which contradicts and repudiates the entire doctrine of the resurrection. Some believe that the following verse is proof that when we die we go to heaven immediately.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 2 Cor. 5:8.

If you read the entire chapter that this verse appears in, you can see that Paul is stressing his desire to be in his glorified, immortal body rather than his carnal flesh. Here and in other of his writings, he does not say that it happens when you die. Just prior to the statement above Paul said,

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 2 Cor. 5:2.

Paul tells us when our mortality shall put on immortality;

[51]Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not **all sleep**, but we shall all be changed, [52]In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised** incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [53]For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 Cor. 15:51-54.

We shall all be changed **AT THE LAST TRUMP!** Two words in these verses stress that the saints that are DEAD (asleep) shall rise first. He doesn't say that the saints that are in heaven shall rise first but refers to those who are dead. In I Timothy Paul is speaking of Jesus and says,

WHO ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. 1 Tim. 6:16

Only Jesus has immortality and only He alone has been resurrected from the grave. Likewise, John tells us in his Gospel,

And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: **AND I WILL RAISE HIM UP AT THE LAST DAY.** John 6:40.

Our faith and belief in Jesus Christ brings us eternal life but we shall not receive it until we are raised from the grave at the last day. It's amazing how false doctrines can arise when just one or two verses of Scripture are distorted and misunderstood even though their misinterpretation flies in the face of the rest of Scripture.

I know that it is comforting to some to believe that when their loved ones die that they go to be with the Lord but it also shows a lack of faith and damages the rest of Scripture. Take comfort in the fact that the "dead know not anything" and that death is like sleep wherein there is no consciousness of time. It will be like a moment since your death until the time you are resurrected. There is no horror in that. Sleep is used in Scripture to describe the condition of those who have died but it is not an exact parallel. It is a good analogy if you can imagine being in a room where no outside light could penetrate and you fell soundly asleep and did not dream. When you awoke, there's no way that you could know how long you had been asleep. This has been shown through experimentation and this is the picture we should have when Scripture speaks of death. There is no time in death. From the time you die until the time you are resurrected is but a moment in God's timeline. We should not *wrest* the word of God to make ourselves feel better.

Heaven and the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven) are not the same thing when mentioned in Scripture. The Kingdom of Heaven is FROM heaven but heaven is not where the saints will reside. "Heaven" is the abode of God and the Kingdom of Heaven is the abode of the

saints. Jesus came preaching the “Gospel of the Kingdom.” The “good news” (Gospel) was about the Kingdom. Many hymns that have been written over the years continually reinforce this false concept of immediately going to heaven when you die. A few that come to mind are; “Mansion Over the Hilltop,” “I’ll Fly Away,” “When They Ring Those Golden Bells,” etc., etc.

God bestows a great blessing on those who overcome and those who press on to the high calling in Christ Jesus. The blessing is that they shall rule and reign with Christ and that rule shall be here on the earth. In Isaiah we are told,

With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Isa. 26:9

Daniel talked about a stone that smote the feet of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream and the stone became a great mountain (Kingdom) and filled the whole earth; See Daniel 2:35. The Kingdom of God is going to fill the entire earth and the overcomers are going to rule and reign with Christ in **that** kingdom. The promise of this kingdom goes back at least to Abraham and Christ came proclaiming that the kingdom was at hand. Jesus also taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us and it shall burst forth and fill the entire earth at a time not too distant.

Another Scripture which is used to support the idea that we go to heaven when we die is found in Ecclesiastes.

Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Eccl. 3:21

But read the verse just before this which says,

All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Eccl. 3:20

The spirit which returns to God is the breath of life and Ecclesiastes makes it clear that life ends upon death. Those who teach that we go to be with the Lord in our spirit when we die are creating a concept that is simply not found in Scripture. This concept also teaches a form of transcendental existence wherein there really is no such thing as death. Believing that one simply goes from the physical realm to the “spiritual” realm when they die makes all that Scripture says about death a lie. Christians do not have to fear death but death is real and without the promise of the resurrection, we would have much to fear. Death is the **last** enemy that shall be defeated when death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. But until then, until the resurrection, death is as real as life.

Would it make any sense if we were to die in the physical realm and then enter into some sort of spiritual realm in heaven and eventually return to a physical immortal realm here on earth? The truth of the matter is that there is only one true SPIRIT BEING and that is God and God alone. You do not exist outside of the physical realm which God created. Paul tells us what it means to be in the spiritual realm and in a spiritual body in his first letter to the Corinthians. In the fifteenth chapter, Paul is illustrating how various forms of life must die to bring forth fruit and the fruit brought forth is not the same as that which died.

[42] So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: [43] it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: [44] It is sown a natural body; **it is raised a spiritual body**. There is a natural body, and there is a **spiritual body**. 1 Cor. 15:42-44

The spiritual body which Paul is referring to is not some apparition or ghost that is transparent and is some ethereal being. He was referring to this mortal body putting on immortality and being completely filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. That is what is meant to be in a spiritual body.

If you were a spirit, how would you see? How would you hear? How would you speak? Would you have a form? What form? How would you hold one another? When people think of a spirit being they actually think of one having a form and all the senses and abilities that you have in a physical body except they're invisible or have an ethereal body. If you had a spirit body (whatever that is) and a mouth and ears and eyes, you wouldn't be a spirit. The expression, "spirit body," is an oxymoron. Scripture says that God is spirit and that He is omnipresent because he has no form. Truly He spoke of Himself when He said, "I AM." In order to appear to us, He took on the form of a man, Jesus Christ. If He had not done this, you could not see God because you can't see a spirit. John tells us that,

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him," John 1:18 And again, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. 1 John 4:12

The two most glaring examples of "being in the spirit," are when Paul was taken up into the third heaven and John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And it's my firm belief that their bodies were still here on terra firma. I have met men who have had similar experiences and they too did not leave the earth. Being in the spirit means to be in communion with God and to hear His voice or see a vision He has sent you.

Of the 551 verses in the New Testament which use the word, heaven, there is no place where we are told that we will go to heaven or live in heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is here and it will eventually fill the whole earth. The mountain of God will draw all the inhabitants of the earth:

And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law will go forth out of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Micah 4:2.

This is the Stone Kingdom spoken of by Daniel.

In the one prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples as an example of how to pray, He emphasized praying for the kingdom of God to come upon the earth so that God's will could be done **ON EARTH** as it is in heaven. The kingdom of God is our future home and not some "spiritual" existence in the heavenlies. Nor is there any temporal "spiritual" existence in the heavenlies until we return to earth to set up God's kingdom. Paul stressed the resurrection again

and again in his writings and for him to have said that he would be with Christ upon his death would have refuted everything he was saying to those to whom he wrote in Rome, in Corinth, in Phillipi, his letter to Timothy and in the book of Hebrews. If we go to be with the Lord immediately upon dying, then why teach about a resurrection at all. Further, why didn't Paul teach about going to be with the Lord immediately rather than cloaking it in the phrase, "...willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord?"

Paul tells us in his epistle to the Hebrews that even those who had been raised (resurrected) from the dead in both the Old Testament and the New Testament would die and await a "better resurrection." He states,

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: Heb. 11:35.

It has truly been said that people will choke on a gnat and swallow a camel.

Because of people wanting to believe that we go to be with the Lord immediately, it was necessary to create some place where those went who were not "saved." Thus came into being the doctrine of purgatory and the "underworld." It was also a good money maker since people were also taught that they could pray their loved ones out of purgatory by purchasing candles and issuing up prayers for their souls.

Peter also made a statement that is used to support the idea of purgatory as stated in his first epistle.

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 1 Pet. 3:19

In Barnes' note on the Bible, in Matthew Henry's commentary and in John Darby's synopsis, all agree that Peter was not implying that Jesus went to hell and preached to those being held there. Although they all believe that hell is a place, they concur that Jesus did not go to such a place and preach. Peter's reference is to Jesus having spoken to the generation in Noah's day and told them through Noah to repent. Peter also says that this was the way in which God spoke to those in times past through His prophets.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify,... 1 Peter 1:11

Again we see the effort to take a single verse and make an entire doctrine out of it. If Jesus went to "hell" and preached to those who were supposedly there, does that not infer that there is a way out of "hell?" Can we not see that each time we produce doctrines out of one or two verses and which doctrine is contrary to the rest of Scripture that we continually sacrifice truth for convenience or wellbeing?

If Jesus had gone some place in the Spirit while in the tomb, he too would not really have suffered death. Scripture tells us that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, Jesus would be in the tomb in like manner for three days and that does not mean that His spirit was going about "business as usual." It wasn't just His body that was dead, it was also His consciousness; mind, soul and body.

I've been told also that what Jesus said to the thief on the cross next to Him proves we go to heaven immediately. What a lot of people don't realize is that translators of the ancient text

were at liberty to put punctuation in as they saw fit. The verse in Luke can be written to say something completely different than what most believe, which shows the power of punctuation.

And he said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”
Luke 23:43 NASB

Now, let’s move the comma that’s in the quote.

And he said to him, “Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise.”
Luke 23:43 NASB

Even punctuation can be used to bolster one’s beliefs.

I will continue to emphasize the fact that doctrines which contradict or conflict with other parts of Scripture should be scrutinized with a fine toothed comb and due consideration be given to their validity. So far we’ve seen how the idea of exerting one’s “free will” in order to be saved not only goes against what Scripture says but also cannot co-exist with the sovereignty of God. The notion that the lake of fire is literal and synonymous with hell also conflicts with God’s word and His very nature.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. James 1:8

Whenever you try to hold two opposing views, a tension is created and rather than trying to resolve the tension, people usually ignore the problem altogether and continue in their deception. Every major Judeo-Christian doctrine falls into this category and until people stop listening to others and go directly to God and seek answers from Him, they will never learn the truth of His word.

Suggested reading, video and audio:

The Bible