

HEAVEN ON EARTH...FINALLY – LESSON 2

“But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth; the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13)

HOMESICK FOR EDEN

- Much of our life, both joys and temptations, are related to a longing to return to Eden.
- Our present sinful human nature is unable to truly satisfy itself with earthly pleasures alone.
- Truly, we are all made in the image of God, so this desire for eternal life, immortality, perfection, lasting peace and eternal joy is hardwired into every person’s spiritual DNA.
- Solomon reminds us that “...God has also set eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).
- We long for Heaven simply because we were made for it.
- We, who were originally designed by God for Eden, an eternal existence in a perfect place, still feel the pull inside of us for the life we were designed for. Though we lost that perfect existence, we can still feel the loss.
- Simply put, we desire very strongly to return to Eden...What God has placed inside of us cannot be turned off; it can only be tuned out!
- This desire to have a life that is perfect forever is entirely normal because you were designed for it.
- Put another way, the frustration we feel when things go badly, when we get sick, when pain and suffering come upon us is tied to our original design.
- We get frustrated because we feel life shouldn’t be like this...And we are right!
- What we are experiencing is a Holy Discontentment.

A HOLY DISCONTENTMENT

- We are always trying to capture something that is elusive.
- There is an important part of us that longs and dreams of life on earth *as it could be*.
- We have been led to believe that if we are not completely fulfilled on earth, something is wrong with us as Christians – maybe we are not as spiritual as we should be.
- There is a lingering discontentment (that will ebb and flow over our lifetime) with living in a fallen, sinful world that is not only to be expected but is completely understandable and valid.
- Many scriptures echo and affirm that these feelings are not wrong; they are simply the righteous longing for the **Better Country** we were designed for.
- You are not the only one who has felt these feelings; in fact, you are in extremely good company, as you will see.

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. *Yet, what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to **depart and be with Christ, which is better by far**; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (Philippians 1:21-24, emphasis added).*

- The great Apostle Paul, who had seen Heaven up close and personal (2 Corinthians 12:1-5), wanted to go back!
- His desire was to depart and be with Christ, which he knew by experience was “better by far”.
- He was, like those before him, thinking of **A Better Country**.
- The author of Hebrews reminds us that the Saints of Old admitted that they were “...aliens and strangers on earth” (Hebrews 11:13).
- Moses himself never entered the Promised Land; he was permitted to see it only from the mountains of Moab (Numbers 27:12; Deuteronomy 3:27).
- “I am an alien and stranger among you,” Abraham confessed to the Hittites (Genesis 23:4).
Speaking to the Lord, David confesses, “We are aliens and strangers in Your sight, as were all our forefathers. (1 Chronicles 29:15).
- Peter said, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

EARTH WILL BE RESTORED

- God has planned since Adam and Eve sinned to restore creation from the effects of sin.
- Sin just didn't affect mankind, as we know, but the earth and heaven as well.
- Paul tells us, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22).
- Not only do we look forward to being liberated from the suffering that sin brought into our world, but so does creation itself. "The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage and decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).
- It is no coincidence that the first two chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-2) begin with the creation of the heavens and the earth and the last two chapters begin with the re-creation of the heavens and earth.
- All that was lost at the beginning will be restored in the end...and far more will be added besides!

This is not some new teaching but something that the Old Testament promised and the New Testament confirmed.

- Peter preaches in the Book of Acts about Jesus to the Jews and tells them, "...He must remain in Heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets" (Acts 3:21, emphasis added).
- What were those promises?
"Behold, I will create new heavens and the new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).
"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before Me, declares the Lord, so will your name and descendants endure" (Isaiah 66:22).
"That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. *But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness*" (2 Peter 3:10-13 emphasis added).

- Whose promise was this? It was Jesus' promise! Hallelujah!
- When God created the heavens and earth, He pronounced them good. There was nothing wrong with God's original design of earth or our bodies (meant to be eternal) or our universe.

He is not planning to trash the whole design but to renew and restore it to an infinitely better than original condition.

- "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).
- If earth is entirely destroyed and we are to spend eternity in some celestial place in an ethereal condition, exactly when will this be fulfilled??? In other words...inherit what?

THE IMPORTANCE OF "PLACE"

Place is important to God. It is part of His creation – the part for us. Eden wasn't just fellowship with God; it was a real, tangible place. Israel, the Promised Land, wasn't just a spiritual truth or ideal; it was a genuine piece of real estate...a promised place. The temple of God where God's Presence dwelt was a tangible, localized place where God chose to make Himself visible to us (or reveal Himself to us). Our resurrected bodies will be eternally reunited with our perfected spirits. We will **not** be disembodied spirits floating around an ethereal city. Heaven is referred to as a city or a country – a physical place.

But having said all that – and that is a LOT...It is important to remember that the Bible teaches us that the new heaven and the new earth will not commence until the very end...after the Rapture, after Christ comes again, the millennial period, the resurrection and the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20-21).

This leaves us with a period of time between our passing from this life to the next and that final state. Since we won't be on the earth in our old bodies and we won't yet be on the new earth in our resurrected bodies, where exactly do believers go when they die? We'll be in the same place that Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, the disciples and every other believer who has died lives right now, this very moment...**PARADISE**.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...LESSON 3 – "WAKING UP IN HEAVEN (PARADISE)"