

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

Bible Prophecy & End Times

What Is Heavens Like

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

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Saturday 2/8: Clean Up: The Saunders

BOARD

- 1 🎵 Pure and Holy 647
- 2 🎵 Lord God Almighty [ALL] 3
- 3 🎵 Sweet By and By [ALL] 778
- 4 🎵 Doxology
- 5 🎵 To Canaan's land I'm on my way [Handout-ALL]
- 6 🎵 So Send I You by Grace made Strong [ALL] 440
- 7 🎵 Find Us Faithful [Once] 456

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (NASB)

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight

— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Last Lord's Day we talked about the Four Heavens.

I know you remember the hard to get your mind around idea that the divine heaven is simply God Himself.

And, we talked about the Physical heaven of which David spoke in **Psalm 8:3-4 (NASB)**

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

Can man improve on God's Physical heaven?

The Chinese think they can.

China recently announced plans to launch a satellite over Chengdu that would be a fake moon, helping to illuminate the city after dark, thus saving money on electricity.

China is planning to upgrade the moon.

We know China has been advancing rapidly in technology, but upgrading the celestial nighttime orb?

Well, that's not quite what China is planning to do, but what their technologists have in mind is impressive nonetheless.

They plan to launch a fake moon or even several fake moons — actually “illumination satellites” — over the city of Chengdu (population of 11.5 million), so that the light from these spheres can help illuminate the city after dark.

Their light is supposed to be eight times brighter than moonlight and provide a dusk-like glow.

If they work, it's projected that they will lessen the need for street lamps and thus lower electricity costs.

While this may all sound far-fetched, China is not the first to try to light up the night from the sky above.

Back in 1993, Russia proposed to spread an aluminum-covered plastic film in space, attached to a spacecraft to reflect sunlight back to earth — which, of course, is what the moon does.

Russia hoped this film could add to the moonlight at night.

It was called Project Znamya, and in testing, it had a very brief success over a very small area, but myriad problems led to the project being abandoned.

An orbital mirror made of diamonds also figured into the plot of the James Bond film, *Die Another Day*, but that was fiction.

Mankind has long been fascinated with heaven.

I'm fascinated that one of the most popular questions about the afterlife is "**Will my pet be in heaven?**"

Now, admittedly, I can't say for sure, because I haven't been there.

Isaiah describes the Messianic Kingdom in terms of peaceful coexistence:

Isaiah 11:6-9 (NLT)

6 In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. 7 The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. 8 The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. 9 Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD.

John the Revelator says in **Revelation 6:2** there is a **white horse**, and in **6:4** there is a **red horse**, and **6:5** there is a **black horse**, and in **6:8** a **sickly pale horse**.

And in speaking of Jesus' return from Heaven, John says:

Revelation 19:11-14 (NASB)

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who

sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. 13 *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.

And that is the totality of my knowledge of animals in heaven.

Preachers used to talk about celestial streets of gold while congregations sang joyful hymns like “I’ll Fly Away” and “**When the Roll is Called up Yonder.**”

But the most passionate accounts of heaven now come from people outside the church.

Most seminaries don’t teach courses on heaven.

Biblical scholars say most preachers avoid the topic altogether out of embarrassment, indifference or fear.

2 Cor. 5:1-10 is the most significant text about the intermediate state, and what happens when we die.

There is a lot of interest in heaven.

You have Eric Clapton singing about his 5 year old son who fell 53 floors to his death, and Eric singing to his son his question:

**“Would you know my name;
If I saw you in heaven?
Would you feel the same;
If I saw you in heaven?
I must be strong and carry on;
‘Cause I know I don’t belong there in heaven.”**

Isn't it sad to know you don't belong in heaven?

And, then you have a committed believer like William Matthew Golden who wrote two very popular hymns.

In 1918 he wrote and recorded "A BEAUTIFUL LIFE."

**Each day I'll do a golden deed,
By helping those who are in need,
My life on earth is but a span,
And so I'll do the best I can,
The best I can.**

A Beautiful Life was a poetic exposition of Luke 10 and the Good Samaritan.

But his most popular song was about Heaven, and he wrote it four years earlier.

It has been recorded by many popular singers, like The Carter Family, John Cash, Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson, Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs, The Jordanaires, Pete Seeger, and the list of artists goes on and on. William Golden was an evangelist of the church of Christ in Mississippi, and had a good reputation for his revival meetings, as well as for his hymns.

Born in 1878 in Mississippi, and spent his entire life there. He died in an automobile accident in 1934.

He recorded and published his most popular hymn in 1914. He titled it "**TO CANAAN'S LAND I'M ON MY WAY.**"

**To Canaan's land I'm on my way,
Where the soul of man never dies;
My darkest night will turn to day,
Where the soul of man never dies.**

**Dear friends, there'll be no sad farewells,
There'll be no tear dimmed eyes,
Where all is peace and joy and love,
And the soul of man never dies.**

Bro. Golden really understood the Biblical concept of the soul continuing on after its separation from the body.

But...let me ask you...

Where do you get your understanding of what life after death is like?

Remember the little book which allegedly gives a little boys outer body experiences.

And that little book has become the authority on what takes place after death.

Nearly 20 million copies of the book had been sold.

And of course Hollywood jumped on the book and made a movie based on it.

The producers of the movie hoped to make a little more than \$7 million dollars, but it has brought in more than \$110 million.

John Piper argues against such books from

Isaiah 8:19 (NASB)

19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*

He says:

"God's beef with necromancy is that it belittles the sufficiency of his communication. Why would you inquire of the dead to find out what you want to know instead of inquiring of me? And if they say: Well, I have inquired of you and you didn't tell me what I want to know. He would say: Well, that is your problem. I have told you what you need to know. You don't need to know about such and such if I haven't told you. And, in fact, if you go trying to inquire about such and such that I haven't told you, you are dishonoring me. So that is the nature of the argument. And, therefore, I think the prohibition of séances and necromancy applies to this kind of thing and people ought to stop writing those books."

John MacArthur adds:

"For anyone who truly believes the biblical record, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that these modern testimonies —with their relentless self-focus and the relatively scant attention

they pay to the glory of God—are *simply untrue*. They are either figments of the human imagination (dreams, hallucinations, false memories, fantasies, and in the worst cases, deliberate lies), or else they are products of demonic deception.

We know this with absolute certainty, because Scripture definitively says that people do not go to heaven and come back: "Who has ascended to heaven and come down?" ([Proverbs 30:4](#)). Answer: "*No one* has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" ([John 3:13](#), emphasis added). All the accounts of heaven in Scripture are visions, not journeys taken by dead people. And even visions of heaven are very, very rare in Scripture. You can count them all on one hand."

According to religious news service, the movie was seen by more non-Christians than Christians.

What this tells us is that the world is being informed on the concept of Heaven by Hollywood.
Not Scripture.

You have Hollywood producing TV series like
Seventh Heaven
and
Touched by an Angel

Do you know where the "**seventh heaven**" is found?
It's found in the Koran.

What we can say with assurance is that Hollywood passes on a lot of misconceptions.

I have to admit I enjoyed the "**Touched By An Angel**" series, and I also enjoyed the movie, "**It's a Wonderful Life**" starring Jimmy Stewart. But, truthfully, both presented a greatly distorted view of life after death. And, both have had a heavy influence on what the man on the street thinks about life after death.

Let's notice **three things** about what happens when a person dies.

I. In Our Earthly Life We Are Tent Camping

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NASB)

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Our present body is an “**earthly tent,**” but our new body is “**a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens**”

How many of you have ever spent at least one night sleeping in a tent?

The main thing to understand is that a tent is a temporary dwelling compared to a building, which is relatively permanent.

Your body is like a tent, and who you really are lives in the body.

In describing our bodies, Paul says

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NASB)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

You have a visible, outward presence as well as an invisible, inward presence.

The outward person is your body, and the inward person is your soul.

And, before I forget it, whenever I speak of the soul I could just as easily said spirit.

Because both soul and spirit are used interchangeably in both the OT and the NT.

So the real you, the invisible you, lives within a body like a camper lives in a tent.

When you look at me, you can only see the “**outer me**” but there is also

an “inner me.”

President Woodrow Wilson’s favorite limerick was:

**“I know my face ain’t no star;
But I don’t mind it; cause I’m behind it;
It’s the one in front who get the jar.”**

A. Your Body Wears Out and Eventually Dies

Paul said **our outer man is decaying**

Paul wrote about this tent **decaying**.

That’s a reference to death.

It may be destroyed slowly by old age or by some disease.

Or it could be destroyed suddenly, like an automobile accident, or a soldier being shot.

But we all have one thing in common.

This tent isn’t permanent, one day we’ll move out of it.

Everyone has to deal with the thought of death.

**A minister was trying to press this idea to his congregation. He said,
“One day, every member of this church is going to die!”**

There was a young college man started laughing.

The minister said, “What’s so funny about that?”

The young man said, “I’m not a member of this church!”

I’ve read there’s a tombstone with an epitaph that says:

**“Remember young man, as you pass by;
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, you soon shall be.
So prepare, young man, to follow me.”**

Someone added a note to the tombstone that said,

**“To follow you is not my intent.
Until I know which way you went!”**

B. Your Soul Lives Forever

George Macdonald wrote:

“Never tell a child you have a soul. Teach him, you are a soul; you have a body.”

Well, MacDonald was something of a mentor to C.S. Lewis, and this quote has been attributed to Lewis in a slightly modified way:

“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”

Christians need to be mindful, however, that they are embodied creatures with the promise of an embodied resurrection.

Jesus incarnated in a body and resurrected with a body, so Christians should be careful about minimizing their own body.

We spend a lot of time, money, and attention on our bodies.

But Jesus said,

Mark 8:35-37 (NASB)

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The comedian, George Carlin, who is Roman Catholic, once observed:

"I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older; then it dawned on me ... they're cramming for their final exam."

While you are thinking about that, here's something else to mull over.

While your tent is getting more and more feeble, it’s entirely possible that your spirit is getting more and more renewed.

I’ve lived for eight decades in this tent, and while I've had my share of eye and lung and spinal problems, every day I’m more excited about living for Jesus than ever before.

The old hymn we sing makes even more sense.

Remember when you used to sing:

Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

Everyday with Jesus I love him more and more.

**Jesus saves and keeps me,
and He's the one I'm living for.
Everyday with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.**

For we believers

II. Death Allows Us To Be At Home With The Lord

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NASB)

we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Paul sure give us some words of encouragement in that text:
to be at home with the Lord.

At the point of death, our body quits functioning, but our soul immediately go to another realm, which is invisible. Unbelievers go immediately into a realm which is called Tartarus. Believers go immediately into a realm which is called Paradise.

A tombstone in Nantucket, Massachusetts really describes what happens to a Christian at death:

**“Under the sod; And under the trees;
Lies the body; Of Jonathan Pease.
But Pease isn't here; This is just the pod;
Peas shelled out; And went to God.”**

A. We Will Be Souls Without Bodies

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 (NASB)

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed

up by life.

From this Scripture, and others, we gain the picture that after death, whither we are in Paradise or Tartarus, we leave our bodies behind in the grave.

And, we can see from this text that being without a body is an unnatural state for us.

We will be in this intermediate state, which is spiritual by nature, and our earthly bodies would be quiet out of place there.

We will be without bodies, but one day we will be re-clothed with a new body.

B. We will Be Conscious

1 Samuel 28:8-12, 15-17 (NASB)

Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you." 9 But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" 10 Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." 11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me." 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out ... 17 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" ... 16 Samuel said, "...the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary? 17 "The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.

And you remember at the Transfiguration in Matthew 17, that Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus.

And you remember the rich man and Lazarus and that the rich man was

able to converse with Abraham.

The fact that God allowed Samuel to talk with Saul, and the fact that God allowed Moses and Elijah to talk with Jesus, and the fact that God demonstrates the dead can talk implies a continuing conscious existence.

C. We Will Not Have Contact With Those Still on Earth

As we saw in the account of Samuel and the account of Moses and Elijah, so at least twice Scripture mentions the dead contacting those who are alive.

But both of these events are clearly miraculous exceptions.

I know you remember that Abraham refused to send a messenger to warn the rich man's brothers.

And the reason why is because God has expressly forbid such activity. Attempts to contact the spirits of the dead are called spittism, and spiritism is unconditionally condemned in Scripture.

Leviticus 19:31 (NASB)

Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:6, 27 (NASB)

6 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. 27 'Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'"

Deuteronomy 18:9-12 (NASB)

"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. 10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

I have concluded that since God has so strenuously forbid sorcery and spiritism, that such activity is Satanic in origin.

So, we will be bodiless, conscious, not able to talk with those left behind on earth.

But...

D. We Will Be In The Presence of Jesus

When Paul was writing to the church in Philippi he said
Philippians 1:21-23 (NASB)

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

Death is a departure of our soul and spirit to be with Jesus.
Paul used a triple superlative to describe it.

“**very much better**” doesn’t capture the thought.

It should be translated, “**Much much much more better.**”

That’s not good grammar, but it’s good theology.

A Christian shouldn’t fear death.

Paul tells us

Hebrews 12:22-24 (NASB)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the*

righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant

Read that carefully.

Paul tells us we that every Christian is an inhabitant and citizen of Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

The full citizenship of this spiritual domain includes “**myriads of angels,**”

plus all members of the “**church of the firstborn,**”

plus “**God, the Judge of all,**”

and “**Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.**”

Most significantly the circle of fellowship in which every Christian participates includes “**the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect .**”

This phrase confirms the reality of an intermediate state.

“***the* righteous**” refers to all saints, OT and NT.

“**made perfect**” refers to their full sanctification, which is guaranteed only at death; thus the phrase describes saints who have already died.

That they are referred to only as *spirits* is clear proof that after death they exist in a disembodied state, as unclothed spirits awaiting their resurrection bodies.

That these righteous spirits are part of the total citizenry of the heavenly Jerusalem, linked together with angels, the church on earth, God the Father, and Jesus Christ, implies that they are fully existent and fully conscious, and in full fellowship with all the others.

Death for a Christian is departing to be with Jesus.

In the final days of this earthly life, when Paul was about to be executed, he wrote to Timothy and said,

2 Timothy 4:6 (NASB)

the time of my departure has come.

“**departure**” was a word used to describe a soldier who broke camp and folded up his tent to move on to another assignment.

It was also a word used to describe a prisoner set free from his chains.

For a Christian, death is not an ominous, scary prospect.
It is something we can face with as much confidence as we have when we leave one room and walk into another.
For a Christian, death is a change of duty station.
Death is a change of duty station but it is not a Permanent Change.
There will be another Permanent Change to follow.

John Quincy Adams was the sixth President of the United States - in office from 1825 to 1829

His last words, spoken on collapsing in the U.S. Senate, February 21, 1848, two days before he died, were:

This, is the last of Earth. I am content.

Well, to paraphrase Dwight L. Moody, someday you will read in the papers, "A. L. Miller of Orcutt, CA is dead."

Don't you believe a word of it!

At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have left this old clay tenement and moved into a house that is immortal—a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.

I was born of the flesh in 1935.

I was born of the Spirit in 1956.

That which is born of the flesh will die.

That which is born of the Spirit will live forever.

III. At The Resurrection We Will Have New Bodies

Bodilessness and consciousness as such are experienced by everyone in the intermediate state.

But what will be experienced while we are conscious will differ depending on whether one is saved or lost.

The Bible states quite clearly that some will be in torment while others are in bliss.

Obviously, the answer to “what happens when a person dies” depends on whether or not that person knows Jesus.

This series is on heaven, but the Bible also teaches that those who die

without a personal relationship with God spend eternity separated from Him.

In Luke 16 Jesus pulled back the veil from the afterlife and revealed what happened when two people died.

There was a rich man, whose name isn't given, and there was a beggar named Lazarus.

Lazarus died and Jesus said that the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom.

That's another word for paradise.

Because for any good Jew, joining Abraham would be a heavenly experience.

The rich man died and woke up in Hades.

He was suffering, and to make matters worse, he could look into paradise and see Lazarus and Abraham.

Luke 16:24 (NASB)

"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

Notice the rich man had a sense of a body.

He could see and recognize Lazarus and he understood Lazarus had a finger and he had a tongue.

He had the physical sense of suffering.

The rich man wasn't yet in hell, he was in Hades, which is hellish in nature.

The suffering is ongoing and unabated, but it is not the same thing as the final state of Hell itself.

Hades is like the county jail before a prisoner is sentenced to the state penitentiary.

Lazarus wasn't yet in the final heaven, he was in paradise, the current heaven.

Paradise is like the waiting room for our final heaven, but it is heavenly

in nature.

This interim bliss of the redeemed is delightful.

There will be no tears there.

You will not have arthritic pain there.

It will be a place of joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

But it is not the final place where will spend eternity.

Even though we will be in bliss while in Paradise, we have something far grander to look forward to.

In this interim state of bliss we will be existing in hope and anticipation of the final day when we will receive our new bodies and be allowed to enter our final home.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NASB)

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

One implication of the fact that the intermediate state will be either torment or bliss is that we will know as soon as we die whether we are saved or lost.

We will not have to wait for the judgment day to find out where we will spend eternity.

Where will you be five nanoseconds after you die?

Some people might answer, "I don't care."

But you will care five seconds after you die.

Others answer, "I don't know."

How sad not to have assurance of eternal life.

But if you have placed your faith in Jesus, and complied with His terms of pardon, you can say with assurance, I shall

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NASB)

be at home with the Lord.

Prayer and Invitation