

THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE: HEAVEN (PART 2)

Mark 12:18-27 (ESV) ¹⁸ And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, ¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²² And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.” ²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? ²⁷ He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”

Introduction: Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest theologians America ever produced, had some wonderful things to say about heaven. In a 1733 sermon entitled, “The Christian Pilgrim,” Edwards preached, “God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Beside him, fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows; but the enjoyment of God is the substance ... Therefore it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven ... Why should we ... set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end, and true happiness?”

What makes heaven so glorious? *God is there*. What is the main goal of heaven? *Heaven exists for God*. The main goal of heaven is not simply to make us happy—although it will do that infinitely. Heaven exists for God, to make his glory visible and draw forth our praises.¹

I. **Relationships in Heaven**

A. Marriage

- The Sadducees denied a physical, bodily resurrection. They posed a question to Christ that was noteworthy for its absurdity. They were attempting to show how ridiculous the idea of a bodily resurrection is.
- Jesus tells them that they are wrong (Mk 12:24). People who deny the resurrection are simply in error.

¹ I was greatly helped in the development of this lesson by the following sources: Derek Thomas, *Heaven on Earth* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2018); Michael Allen Rogers, *What Happens After I Die?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

- The Sadducees falsely assumed that this life will continue into the next unaltered. But in heaven, Jesus says, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. They are *like* the angels in heaven. “Like the angels” means an entirely new category.
- We can assume that all relationships in God’s presence will be profoundly deeper than anything we experience in this life. Our relationships with our spouses and families will be more intimate, not less, in eternity where we will be unencumbered by sin (cf. 1 Cor 2:9; Eph 3:20-21).

B. Friendship and Companionship

- In Mark 12, Jesus is not saying there won’t be friendship in heaven. Friendships and companionships require recognition. We shall know each other in heaven. Example: Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances (Lk 24:31; Jn 20:15).
- Have you ever had the experience of meeting someone you thought you knew, but there was something different about them? In glory, we will be able to perceive who we are. But there will be a change—a change so magnificent that it will be difficult at first to make the connection.

II. **Physical Bodies in Heaven**

A. Food

- Jesus’ resurrection is a model/template for ours (cf. 1 Cor 15:20, 49).
- Will we eat food in heaven? Jesus ate fish cooked on a charcoal fire in his resurrected body (Lk 24:40-43). The future form of the kingdom of God is described in terms of a banquet (Lk 14:16-24) or a wedding feast (Rev 19:9).
- *Christianity affirms the material order.* Few truths are more central to Christianity than the physical incarnation and resurrection of the body of Christ. In the consummated kingdom, we will inhabit physical bodies, localized in space and time, in an environment suited for physicality.

B. Cultural Mandate (Gen 1:27-28; 2:15)

- Even in Eden, Adam and Eve worked to bring order and beauty which suggests that in the New Heavens and New Earth, exploration and discovery will continue to be a feature of eternal life.
- *Continuity vs. Discontinuity.* Our resurrection bodies will be fit for a new existence and a new environment, one in which sin and death have no part (cf. 1 Cor 15:35ff).
- Jesus is the prototype, the template. God will transform our bodies to be like his glorious body (Phil 3:21). Our body, currently weak and fragile, will be raised a Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered body (2 Cor 13:4).