

From the February 4, 2008 Issue

What Heaven Really Is

Oh, how sure we seem to be about hell, and how unsure we seem to be about heaven! Now, that is an understatement, isn't it? However, since Jesus has come into flesh, permanently, as the Revelation of Heaven (**Rev 1:1**), it is a lot easier to be more sure about what **Heaven REALLY IS!** In this article I am writing to get way more specific about heaven (but maybe not in the ways we typically think about the subject).

First, let me be more biblically accurate about what the New Testament actually says about "heaven". As author Garry Wills points out in his great book, *What Jesus Meant*, in most cases where the N.T. writers or Jesus say "heaven", they really say "the heavens"! Yes, the Lord's Prayer REALLY says, "Our Father, Who is in the Heavens" (**Matt 6:9-10**). That is IMPORTANT, and already begins to add more clarity to the subject, doesn't it?! The Bible clearly records that God the Father, Son and Spirit dwell everywhere, and in all heavens (**Psalms 139**)! Most people who believe in God believe that God is Omnipresent, or everywhere present, right? So.....

...if God lives in the heavens and God is everywhere, then we already have a richer and more accurate view of heaven: **Whatever heaven is, it is something that is literally everywhere since God is everywhere!** Ah-Ha! Consider this question, "*Did God live in heaven BEFORE he created the heavens and the earth?*" Or, this one, "*Can you actually picture the Father, Son and Spirit not living in "heaven"—bliss, joy, paradise, (even before the heavens were created?)*" I can't!!! Let's tie things together and clarify!

What I am trying to help you see with questions like these is that, fundamentally, we seem to know "in our guts" that heaven is NOT primarily a place! If heaven is a "place," we would honestly and biblically have to say it is "all places" because most of us believe that the Triune God dwells everywhere and that there is not anyplace God is not! And, well, God is in...errr... Heaven...I mean the heavens!

If you can be open to the idea that the Father, Son and Spirit lived in heaven BEFORE They created "the heavens and the earth" (**Gen 1:1**), AND that **Triune God IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN A RELATIONAL BEING (I John 4:16)**, then *there* is our more CONCRETE answer to realizing what Heaven—and "the heavens"—REALLY are:

Heaven—and "THE HEAVENS"—is the Relationship that the Father shares with the Divine/Human Son in the Spirit EVERYWHERE (and of which humanity and creation are NOW a permanent part in Jesus- 2 Cor 5:14, Eph 2:4!!!)

Yes!! We, humanity and creation, are ALREADY in Heaven! We are already where Triune God IS! We are even already in "the Heavens", in Jesus, and we always will be (**Col 3:3!!**) We have a permanent and abiding relationship with God in Jesus, and the Triune God will NEVER be God without us! He won't be God without you, no matter where He is at (which is literally everywhere, remember?!) Ha-Ha!!!

Wherever JESUS is, WE (YOU) ARE! Never let go of our Good News, which is that **Jesus is the God/Man IN WHOM ALL THINGS DWELL, ARE SUSTAINED, AND LIVE, MOVE AND**

HAVE THEIR BEING - PERMANENTLY (JN 1:1-3; COL 1:16-17; ACTS 17:28; 1COR 8:6-7; HEB 1:1-3!) Notice that these are all **PRESENT TENSE TRUTHS** (and **MUST** be because Jesus IS GOD and alive forevermore - **Romans 6:5-11!!**)

In the broken parts of me, I too feel your pain! This view of “Heaven” appears to be too human, doesn’t it?! For some it may even appear to be less exciting than, let’s say, the “American Dream.” *You can begin to see what has happened, can’t you?* We’ve been taught to dismiss our present Main Streets for “Streets of Gold!” We are waiting to eat more “godly” fish, instead of taking seriously that Jesus AFTER HIS RESURRECTION validated the eating of our “just human” fish in His Divine/Human belly, on one of our “just human” beaches (**John 21:9-14, Luke 24:42!**) We’ve been taught that we have to DO something to get to God in heaven, instead of believing the Truth that God has gotten to us and brought heaven here (**Matt 1:18-23!**)

We have been taught to dismiss our humanity instead of respecting and dignifying it, like God does. After all, God the Son thought our sinful human flesh good enough and worth enough to enter into. And it is our “just human” nature that the One and Only Triune God has embraced forever (**Col 1:19 - dwell = “to house permanently”!!!**)

Yes, we have fundamentally missed Heaven—and “the heavens”—that are right in front of our faces! It’s alright to admit it! By admitting it, we can repent (have a radical mind change, and start enjoying it!) Yes, we have missed the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit in which we were born already INCLUDED!!

We are waiting to see God at the “pearly gates” and are missing His “pearly whites” in the distinct features of our sons’ and daughters’ toothy smiles! We think people are dredging up their own human good instead of realizing that all good things come from God (**James 1:17!**) We walk all over “God’s good earth,” “in front of God and everybody,” trying to earn a place in heaven while ignoring the fact that this same Triune God reconciled, created and renewed everything, everywhere, in Jesus’ Human Body (**2 Cor 5:16-19!**)

We desire a land “full of milk and honey,” but we fail to taste and see how milk and honey flows to us through the hands of farmers and grocers around the world. This is God’s PRESENT Kingdom of grace in action. Open your eyes and SEE!

Oh, that we would “wake up and smell the coffee” and drink it right here in the heavens! Oh that we might even see our coffee (and/or tea) for what it really is **AND LOVE EACH OTHER AROUND THE COFFEE TABLE RIGHT HERE ON EARTH IN THE RELATIONSHIP WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE WITH THE FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT, IN JESUS!!**

We ARE adopted into the family of God; we are in the heavenly places in Jesus, AND,

- 1.) Our Father, Who is in the heavens (**Matt 6:9-10**)...
- 2.) Has sent His Kingdom Reign And Fulfilled His will (**Luke 20:21, John 19:30**)...
- 3.) **On Earth** as it is in the heavens (**2 Tim 1:8-10**)

YES! Heaven is HERE and NOW and we ARE IN IT!!!

So, the Triune God lives in Heaven and is present EVERYWHERE, including here on earth;

therefore, we are in a dimension of Heaven already. **This cannot be overstated and is NOT hyperbole or exaggeration (even though to our fallen minds it always sounds like Gospel—"Good News that sounds 'too good to be true!'")**

We must learn to allow our understanding of Who God Really IS to dominate our understanding of His Creation and Humanity that became fallen due to Evil! Even our 5 senses and consciences are defiled (**I Cor 8:7, Col 2:20-23, Titus 1:15!!**) The Triune God is not subject to evil and its illusions! Evil is subject to Him and His Truth (**Job 2:6!**)

Because Jesus is the one who sustains all things in himself, there is NO such thing as a FALLENNESS OUTSIDE of HEAVEN (which is the relationship of the Father, Son and Heaven shared with all things in the Son!) Nothing is outside the domain of God's creation sustained in the Son (Acts 17:28).

So, verses like this - Luke 10:18-20 - must be seen within the objective context of Heaven! Even our ability to tread "over all the power of the enemy" and our interaction with Satan and evil creatures AFTER Satan's fallenness "from heaven" can ONLY occur because all of creation is being sustained in union with Jesus and not apart from Him!

There is no reality but the reality of our inclusion in Triune God's relationship. Whatever Hell is, it is an experience within our union with God in Jesus. You cannot flee the Father, Son and Spirit no matter where you go, and Humanity and Creation are in permanent UNION with God in Jesus Christ (Psalm 139, John 8:12!)

When we fail to understand that we are already in heaven NOW, we miss out on the full experience of reality. Hence, the continual cry to repent and be transformed in the renewing of our minds and the way we think (**Rom 12:1-2!**) I challenge you to give it a try in God's grace! The N.T. writers, and present believers are a great witness to this truth!

Let's face it! If everyone believed that we were in heaven RIGHT NOW, and that the Father, Son and Spirit were with us and have blessed us with everything in Jesus (and they have - **Eph 2:4-6**), everything would be positively transformed and be more like the heaven on earth Christ shares with us!! We would no longer try to find life in anything else because we will have embraced our "adoption as sons" and provided liberation and rest to all of creation in Jesus, the Life (**Romans 8:12-21!**) This is what the Father is wanting, has fulfilled in Jesus, and we are watching unfold in the Spirit!

Still not completely satisfied with this view of Heaven? Me either!

Okay, so here is my dissatisfaction with this all "too human" view of Heaven Jesus shares with us.

My dissatisfaction is in the evil creatures, in me, and in you, and in the sinful part of us that has yet to embrace our real death in Jesus, which was put to death - forever! My dissatisfaction is in the amazing lies we can tell ourselves and believe!

It is the corrupt nature we inherited from Satan and Adam that hinders us from receiving and believing the Truth about Who we REALLY are! Yes, in our distinction, we often stumble blindly in the real union we have with Jesus, in heaven, in our day-to-day lives (**I Peter 2:7-8!**)

My dissatisfaction—and I presume yours—is in this fallen and corrupt nature, where we have real and abundant milk and honey in our countries and cities, only to see it snatched by the powers and a few people in control before it can get to anyone else, especially the poor! It is in the fallen part of us that we often have strong faith in something else besides the Truth and cause great harm to ourselves and others (**Romans 9:3-18!**)

We blindly pursue the heaven that is already our INHERITANCE (free gift) in Jesus, and experience it in very perverted and discouraging ways (**Ephesians 5:3-9!**) We pursue it even though there is nothing else but the Reality of the Triune God, and even though **NO OTHER GOD OR IDOL REALLY EXISTS (I Cor 8:4!)**

BUT, this is what the Son has addressed and overcome in His Incarnation (**Matt 28:10, 16-20**), and this Truth has been spreading throughout all of creation ever since He ascended with us back to the Father in the Spirit (**Col 1:3-6, 1 John 5:4-5!**) It is only a matter of time before we ALL SEE, because the Father, Son and Spirit pursue us, personally, **UNTIL** we are found, and we KNOW we are found and were never really lost to Him – (**Luke 15!** Notice that word “UNTIL” in this ONE Parable, **v.3**, and take it seriously, as Peter Gray has pointed out in his little book *Until They Are Found*). NO! We will not always live in a darkened and dim view of heaven (**Hebrews 8:11!**), but, in fact, will ALWAYS be learning about the Life and Love of the Triune God in the heavens (**Luke 1:31-33!**)

Yes, **Heaven is HERE and NOW**, and **Heaven will ALWAYS be HERE and NOW** because **Triune God ALWAYS lives in the HERE and NOW**, and we are united with Him in Jesus, forever (**Eph 4:6!**) Ask Him to help you (and me!) to see it more clearly, more quickly (**Eph 3:14-21!**) Ha-Ha!!!

~ *Tim Brassell*