

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Nearly every religion on earth believes that there is a heaven where the deities reside. Many believe that the reward of a righteous life is to spend eternity in heaven with the god of one's belief. Most Christians believe that they will go to heaven after death to spend eternity with God and Christ. But this belief has been woven into the fabric of Christian doctrine from non-Christian sources. The surprising truth is that the Bible does not teach us that our reward is to be found in heaven! If the Bible is to be the source of our beliefs, we must discard the idea that we will live in heaven with God. Since the creation of man, it has been God's ambition to live with man on the earth!

REV 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

Notice that God's ultimate plan is to come down from Heaven and live here with us! Christ used many parables to teach that although He was going to leave His disciples on earth for a time, He planned one day in the future to return to establish the Kingdom Of God on the earth.

LUK 19:11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, *and to return.*

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that Christ was returning to resurrect the dead in Christ.

1TH 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

We shall forever be with Christ. Where does He plan to be for eternity? Certainly not in heaven! Again and again, Jesus told His disciples that His kingdom would be on the earth. Just after His ascension to Heaven, angels told the disciples that He was coming back to earth in the same manner:

ACT 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.

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Notice in verse 12 that Christ's ascension to Heaven occurred on the Mount of Olives. An Old Testament prophecy reveals that Christ will descend to earth to the same spot from which He left it: The Mount Of Olives:

ZEC 14:1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 *And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*

This second coming of the Messiah occurs on the great "Day Of The Lord", spoken of in many prophetic passages in the Old Testament and in the Books of Revelation, 2nd Peter, 1st Thessalonians, Acts and 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Indeed, the entire book of Revelation is set in The Day of the Lord (or Lord's Day, as John describes it) and describes the events surrounding the coming of the King of Kings to take the kingdoms of this world to be the "Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev11:15). Christ will be reigning on the earth, in Jerusalem as the Kingdom of God spreads to fill the entire earth.

The previous article in this series described the resurrection of the saints from sleep in the dust of the earth to immortal life in an eternal body that cannot be harmed or killed. This is the free gift of God. Rev 11:15 was referred to above. If we read it in context, we can also learn about the reward that God has prepared for those same saints:

REV 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.* 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and is to come; because thou have taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, *and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou should give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great;...*

Part of the reward of the saints is ruler ship with Christ:

REV 5:9 And they [the saints] sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou were slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Daniel 7 also shows that the saints, then immortal, will be given ruler ship, with Christ, over the earth:

DAN 7:22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; *and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.*

We clearly see that the Bible does not teach that life in heaven is the reward of those who are saved and made immortal. The teaching of the Bible is much more inspiring than the tradition

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taken from pagan philosophy and mythology! The saints are going to manage the earth, under the authority of Jesus Christ! Under the wise, prudent and righteous rule of Jesus Christ, one thousand years of peace, prosperity, health and happiness will descend on the earth:

REV 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The Bible does not tell us what God has in mind for the epoch after the culmination of the thousand years. One thing is certain, however. After Christ has dwelt on the earth for a millennium, the Father himself plans to make his residence on earth, with men. The Father has great things planned for his children. He will remake the entire universe, in a form that will not decay, as all physical things do:

REV 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

We owe our thanks to the Father and Jesus Christ for their plan for our eternal futures as members of their family, with responsibilities in their eternal kingdom. Our future is to be spent with them on the earth, but as the Bible shows us, not in heaven.