

Will Heaven Be One Eternal Church Service?

by Gary T. Panell

I have heard Christians say things like, "We will be singing praises to God throughout eternity when we get to heaven." If you are not a Christian this probably does not appeal to you! No doubt, you are thinking about some services you have attended at church or some you have heard about. I have good news for you, those Christians that say these things, though they are sincere, are sincerely wrong, according to the Word of God.

Nowhere in the Bible will you see Heaven described as a church service with no end. The truth of the matter is, the Bible uses the word "Paradise," when it speaks of Heaven. Jesus used this word "Paradise" when He spoke to the thief who was dying on the cross beside Him. "Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:42-43)

The word "Paradise" comes from the Greek word (PARADEISOS) that really means the Garden of Eden. The Greeks got the word from Persia. A writer named Xenophon describes Paradise this way, "A wide open park, enclosed against injury, yet with its natural beauty unspoiled, with stately forest trees, many of them bearing fruit, watered by clear streams, on whose banks rove large herds of antelopes or sheep." This is an interesting description because it reminds us a lot of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived. They were the first man and the first woman who lived on this earth. The Bible teaches they were created by God, and placed in a beautiful garden. This Garden is described in some detail in Genesis 2:7-25.

Adam and Eve were given the garden to live in and some enjoyable responsibilities to do, such as tend the garden. The only thing they could not do was to eat from the one tree in the center of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:8-9) You may have heard the story, and what happened next, that is right, they disobeyed and were expelled from the garden.

You might ask, "What happened to the Garden of Eden?" Good question, for the answer to that question look with me in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 2:7 it says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." So now the Garden of Eden is in Heaven, the very place Jesus said He and the thief, who repented, would be after they died.

You might ask, "What else is this Paradise like?" I am glad you asked that question. Listen to what, Psalm 16:11, has to say. "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." God created the pleasures we have here on

earth, like sex, eating, seeing, hearing, feeling, learning, and so on. He also has something far better for us in Paradise. In fact, we cannot even imagine in our little minds what it will be like, and that is what the Bible says in, 1 Corinthians 2:9. "But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." It is beyond our wildest imaginations!

Adam and Eve had fellowship with God in the garden in the cool of the day. After they listened to Satan's lies and sinned, this fellowship with their Creator was broken. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:6-8) Sin had separated them from their Creator, just as it does for us today. Now all Adam and Eve's descendants are born with sin in their lives. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Our good works are like fig leaves in God's sight, and we cannot cover our sins by our good works.

We cannot go to heaven the way we are, because we would spoil Heaven with our sin. Also, we would be miserable in God's presence with sin in our lives. There is only one solution to this problem. As for Adam and Eve God had to kill animals and take their skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness. So it is today for us. In order to get back into Paradise and fellowship with God, we have to have a covering (sacrifice). This covering is Jesus and His blood. His blood had to be shed on the cross in order to cover our sins. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13) "...put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:14a) If we tell God the Father we are sinners and in need of salvation, He will save us. Then when we die we will go to Paradise to be with God for eternity.

You say, "Tell me more about this Heaven the Bible talks about." Ok, look at this verse in Revelation 21:1, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea." God is going to recreate the planets that are waste and void, like our world was before God changed it. He, no doubt, will have planets for us to visit that will have very wonderful things to see and learn about. Maybe you like skiing. Who knows, maybe God will have a planet for skiing. He will also recreate our planet without the sea. It will have smaller bodies of water, and more room for people living or visiting here. Maybe another planet will be covered with water and have wonderful things such as are in the ocean now, or maybe even new creatures, to study and play with.

People always ask, "Will there be animals in heaven?" Yes, many places in the Bible talk about animals in the new creation. These will not attack us but will be friends to us and each other. It will be like it was for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah 11:6) This is actually speaking about the millennial reign of Christ on this earth, but we believe it will be similar in Heaven.

We do know more about Paradise from Revelation 21-22, and I would encourage you to read both of these chapters in the Holy Bible. Here are just a few verses from these chapters. "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.'" Will we have fellowship with God throughout eternity? Yes, we will praise and glorify Him! Will we be singing in a church or choir for eternity? No! Being with the LORD Jesus Christ, who saved us, will be special. He will treat us special, with the wonderful things He has prepared for us, as born again believers!

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