

HEAVEN: The Church's Future in Eternity – a Life in Retirement or..?

By Jan Lilleby

'And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth.'
Col 3:2.



What kind of thoughts are occupying our minds concerning the hope of salvation for the church, heaven up above where Christ now is sitting with His Father in power and might?

Some will perhaps react saying 'Yes, but...so little has been written of heaven up above and what it is like up there – so we cannot expect to really have so many thoughts and ideas of what it is like!'

And I can of course understand such a reaction to the concept. And still, the Bible tells us to have our minds set on that heaven-up-above...and not on those things which are down here on earth. We cannot escape that fact, can we?

In that regard I wish to take us on a brief little sightseeing through these realms, for truly – we shall not come to an end with the greatness and splendor of heaven,

God's goodness in Christ for us, awaiting us in heaven up above.

No human being in our time has seen heaven.

We have to go back to our apostle Paul and his writings on the subject, to track this concept...men having seen heaven and spoken with Christ in person after His ascension. And Paul wrote that he heard words up there which were forbidden to refer to others. The Lord told him to simply shut up.

It is therefore only the Bible which can give us sure information on things concerning heaven. What we are to do up there and the whole concept of us staying/living in heaven for all eternity in the presence of Christ and God. For it has to have a given purpose, we have to be doing something there, some sort of meaningful activity, right? I am convinced that us staying up there is not a situation which can be compared to a Vacation Resort, or a Retirement Home.

Heaven has a purpose which goes far beyond us only staying there to live as saved believers.

The Bible has already given us a safe clue: We are supposed to serve others, to help others – we are not to just live for ourselves. In short: We are meant to be serving under Christ's command at all times, carrying out His will and His bidding. This is also the order of today for all believers, isn't it?

Eph. 1:17-23 may very well be held as a program-declaration for us in this regard:

' For I always pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation (of insight into mysteries and secrets) in the knowledge of Him. 18: By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the

hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints. 19: And what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe, as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength. 20: Which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. 21: Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age and in this world, but also in the age and in the world which are to come. 22: And He has put all things under His feet and has appointed Him the universal and supreme Head of the church, 23: Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all.'

The Bible anticipates that staying up there in the heavens, is a life which is like the life seen with God's angels! And as just quoted from Paul, it is His will for us to really understand and grasp that hope, that which is our calling. In other words, what that hope and that calling contains – and what will we be doing together with Christ? What kind of ministry if you like, are we going into? It is correct that we are saved by grace alone, in faith in Christ, it is a gift given by God. But in that grace, in that salvation-realm, it is God's indisputable will that we should understand what this means.

Mark 12:25 is a passage of inter-dispensational validity, speaking of what we become as we enter heaven up above.

'For when they arise from among the dead, men do not marry nor are the women given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.'

But even if Jesus say this to clear the dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees (the latter did not believe in resurrection), He did not go on making any description of heaven and the things there, how the nature and the society etc will be. Even the rest of the Bible is pretty meager in

this regard. It is mostly left to our imagination, however – the Bible gives us some clues to some of the key info to learn about heaven.

Jesus puts the saved believer clearly in heaven as an angelic being, and no longer just a human one. No more family, spouse, no children to come from the wife giving birth, and so on. We are like the angels in heaven, says the Lord.

This places us in an entirely new upgraded position, in eternal angelic bodies, angelic power will I assume is included – but submitted the authority of Christ.

The Bible says this of Christ versus angels:

' He Himself (Christ) as much superior to angels as the glorious Name which He has inherited is different from and more excellent than theirs.'

Actually I will conclude that we, as saved believers up in heaven with Christ, is an all-new 'Breed' of angels: We have lived on earth as vulnerable human beings, exposed to sin and failure, sickness and infirmities, and all the sorrow plaguing humankind; and ultimately – death. Very unlike the angels God created to Himself way back. Nevertheless, we shall become like those eternal powerful angelic beings, and I even suppose that we may see ourselves ministering in like manner and power.

Angels in the Bible, as we make more reflections in the topic, are not just confined to heaven up above. No, they are seen down here as the messengers of God, as executors of punishments or blessings. It is too much to be mentioning it all here in the article.

Paul taught that angels were sat to minister to those who should inherit salvation. This was particularly in the Acts period, when he taught the New Covenant to Israel and

proselytes. I do not think they are in ministry on earth in the church dispensation. We learn from Acts history how angels in many circumstances helped the apostles. They rescued Peter, Paul and Silas from jails and thus probably from getting themselves killed by the romans. See Acts 12:5-11 to learn how it went when an angel rescued Peter. Very exiting story.

Angels operate in a dimension which we as human beings just have gotten a few glimpses of. By a totally non-scientific way they seem to perform the impossible. No law of nature can stop an angel from doing what he was sent for.

It is in this regard I dare believe that we see how it may be when we go into a heavenly ministry with Christ in heaven; we will have a power and an ability to do the work of Christ at His command. This has a dimension in it which is impossible to fully comprehend.

It may even be that we, just like angels of old, can operate both in heaven and on earth. It would not come as a surprise if this is so.

There has been written a lot of books in the topic 'Heaven – Hell – Eternity', in which Christian and non-Christian writers are telling their story of having been in heaven, or in Hell or both, and thus they give many freaking and weird descriptions. All of which is untrue. I have no idea whether they have written their fictive stories of heaven and hell in good faith. God will know whom, I am sure.

God has kept under cover most of the facts concerning heaven and how it looks up there. For the simple reason that if we learned really how things are up there – all the glorious heavenly things and blessings in Christ, we would go absolute 'bananas' – it would be unbearable to know of all that glory, and still having to remain on earth for a good number of years. God wanted to spare us of such pain and

wanting...thus we are only given a few glimpses of that glory.

I am convinced that up in heaven, we will still be ourselves...we keep our own personality and psyche, only we will have a totally new heavenly body of power and life, a body that can operate in more than one dimension.

Jesus, after the resurrection, could all of a sudden just 'pop up' inside the room where His disciples were gathered, saying 'Peace Be Unto You'. He got inside there without using the door. And yet, He taught them that He was not a spirit, but of flesh and blood. Thomas put his finger into the wound as the Lord told him to do this. He ate together with them. Super-natural heavenly angelic body, and yet He could act like a normal human being.

I leave it to the Bible reader to investigate and study more in this subject, since it concerns our future in eternity. And as I quoted in the first line above: We must have our minds set on heaven, wouldn't we?

There are Bible Teachers who suggest that our future life in heaven in angelic bodies/heavenly bodies is an act of God, filling up that *vacant vacuum left there since a third of the angels of heaven followed Satan in his fall*. It may very well be so, it is not unlikely.

Nevertheless, let us look forward to that eternity in heaven in knowledge of Christ and what Paul teaches us in Ephesians and Colossians.