

A Prepared Place For A Prepared People

Introduction. The song, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks" has the following lyrics: "On Jordan's stormy bank I stand and cast a wishful eye, to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie. We will rest in the fair and happy land. Just across on the evergreen shore. Sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, by and by, and dwell with Jesus evermore."

We are the "offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). He is the Father of our spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Just like our earthly father, our Heavenly Father wants us to come home. As one grows older, a prepared place to live on earth is a great comfort, but far greater for an eternal home. Most everything that is worthwhile is preceded by preparation (sermon, games, etc.).

I. **A Prepared Place**

- A. The Bible teaches that when we die we go to a place where we await the future judgment.
 1. The intermediate realm is called "Hades." It occurs 11 times in the New Testament and is the realm of the dead -- not the grave or the permanent region of the soul.
 2. After death, our spirit resides in Hades until the final judgment, although there are two separate parts; one for the righteous and one for the wicked.
 - a) As seen in Luke 16:22, 28, Hades is composed of two realms: one for the righteous ("Abraham's bosom") and one for the wicked ("place of torment").
 - b) Just as "Abraham's bosom" is analogous to "paradise" (Luke 23:43), representing the abode of the righteous dead, "hell" (2 Peter 2:4) is analogous to "place of torment" which represents the place of the wicked dead.
 3. At the final judgment, God will make the determination as to who is with Him in heaven, and who is condemned to hell (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:11-15).
- B. Is heaven a place or a state? The Jews thought in terms of three heavens: Where the birds fly, where the planets abide, and where God abides. Paul was "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2). It is a real place.
- C. Where is heaven? It is said to be above, where God dwells (Psalm 14:2; Mark 16:19).
- D. Will the "new heavens" be on earth (Revelation 21:1-3)?
 1. If so it will not be akin to the earth which we know (2 Peter 3:10).
 2. There are no words which will do justice in describing heaven.

- E. Heaven has many appealing characteristics.
 1. Built by the hands of God (2 Corinthians 5:1).
 2. No sorrow, crying, pain, night, death, or unrighteousness (Revelation 21:3-4, 23-27).
 3. Presence of the water of life and the tree of life (Revelation 22:1-5).
 4. Endless glory (2 Timothy 2:10).
- F. To behold God face to face, something man has never done, will be the reward of faithful devotion to Him in this life. The yearning of Philip will be fulfilled (John 14:8)!

II. ***A Prepared People***

- A. Our sojourn upon earth is to prepare us.
 1. We have been warned to prepare to meet God (Amos 4:12). But God has not left us without instructions.
 2. As John tried to prepare the Jews for Christ and His kingdom, so Christ is preparing us for the eternal kingdom.
- B. Rather than talk about who is prepared, observe those who are not prepared.
 1. One who does not believe in Christ (John 8:24).
 2. One who has not repented (Luke 13:3).
 3. One who has not confessed Christ (Matthew 10:32).
 4. One who has not been baptized (Acts 22:16).
 5. Members who are not giving diligence to make their calling sure (2 Peter 1:10-11).
 6. Members who refuse to bear fruit (John 15:2).
 7. Members who are not faithful to the end (Revelation 2:10).
- C. Does this demand sinless perfection?
 1. If it does, then man cannot make it (1 John 1:8-10).
 2. It demands that we put Christ first (Matthew 6:33; Luke 14:26).
 3. It demands that we crucify ourselves (Galatians 5:24; 6:14).
 4. In sports, a player is not awarded honor on never having missed a goal, but rather on his effort to play the game well (cf. 1 John 3:1-3).

Conclusion. "Home" is a beautiful word, rich in meaning. An earthly house is the "American dream," but we should all be interested in a heavenly home. God is the provider of heavenly homes, and one day it will be wonderful to be "go home."

There should be a longing to "go home" (Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 11:10, 13-14; 13:14; 1 Peter 1:4). We will leave light afflictions and suffering behind, and go to a place of ultimate joy. "Going home" demands specific behavior (Romans 12:21; 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Galatians 6:9; Philippians 3:13-14; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 5:9).

No one knows when the end will occur. Are you a Christian? If so, are you faithful? Are you ready for the judgment? God is waiting for you to come home!