

The Kingdom of Heaven is Real Daniel 7:15-18; Revelation 1-22

Introduction

In Daniel 7, the prophet had a dream given to him by God that Daniel described as terrifying and dreadful, which greatly alarmed him to the degree that his color changed. Two times in the chapter, Daniel said that the dream alarmed him and filled him with anxiety. However, there are four references to our victory at the demise of the kingdoms of this earth, the great beast, and the antichrist that served to remind Daniel and all who read his book where our ultimate victory rests. Two of those references point us to God as the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man who is Jesus. The other two references are explicitly about the inheritance of a kingdom that the people of God will receive (see vv. 18, 27). The kingdom is the place where God is; I want to take the time this Sunday and next Sunday to show you why Daniel 7:18, 27 is a big deal especially if you are staring at some things in your life that are terrifying and dreadful.

Daniel is not the only place in the Bible that talks about the kingdom of God as an inheritance we will receive; it is a promise throughout the Bible, and the promise of what the people of God will receive serves to encourage us to endure difficult days that are temporary in-light of an inheritance that is eternal. In Daniel 7:18 we are promised that, “... **the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.**” We are given the New Testament equivalence to Daniel’s promise in 1 Peter 1:3-4, which states: “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...**” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

Concerning the inheritance promised to all who love and worship the God of the Bible, Jesus said: “**Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also**” (John 14:1-3).

So, I want to encourage you this week and next by showing you from the Bible what it is that we will be inheriting as God’s people. I will begin today by showing you what you can expect should you die on this very day, then next week I will show you from the Bible that we will be receiving something that is even better than the present state of heaven. So, if you are a Christian and you died this very moment, here is what you can be absolutely certain of regarding your experience in heaven today.

You Will Be A Better Version of Yourself in Heaven

Shortly after I became a Christian, I experienced all kinds of anxiety regarding my identity in

heaven, for I was afraid that I would lose my identity in heaven. If you have that same question, I can assure you that the only thing that will change regarding your identity is that you will no longer struggle with sin. In Revelation 6:9-11 there are at least six things we learn about our individual experience in heaven; Randy Alcorn, in his book, *Heaven*, lists 21 observations. Let's first look at Revelation 6:9-11, and then I will offer my six observations from the passage:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6:9–11)

Observation #1: As soon as these saints died, they were immediately ushered into heaven. There was no soul sleep, no purgatory, no waiting list to get into heaven... they died and were brought into heaven just like we will be just as the Bible states (see 2 Cor. 5:8).

Observation #2: These saints are aware of their past life and the injustice they experienced while on earth for Christ's sake. We too will be fully aware of the life we have lived here on earth; the only difference in our lives that we and the saints of Revelation 6 will experience will be that unlike what we were on earth, we will be made perfect in heaven (Heb. 12:23).

Observation #3: These saints are conscious of the presence of evil in the world they left behind and they longed for God to judge and avenge their blood on those who dwelled on the earth. They knew that the evil men and women that persecuted them still roamed about the earth untouched by the justice of God. It seems to me that we will be aware of some of the current events on earth while we long with all of heaven for Jesus to make all things new.

Observation #4: These saints are given garments to wear. This might sound really simple, but it seems to me that we will not roam about naked, for why else were these martyrs given white garments?

Observation #5: These saints are able to express themselves. I am not sure how disembodied spirits are able to speak out in a loud voice, but these folks are given the ability to do so. When we get to heaven, we will be able to express ourselves as ourselves.

Observation #6: These saints are free to interact with God. Notice that these people did not need to make an appointment to speak with the Sovereign Lord, they just cried out to Him. It seems to me that we will be able to freely interact with our Triune God, the hosts of heaven, and individual fellow saints.

When we get to heaven, we will be almost free to be as fully human as we were created to be; I say almost because we will not yet have received our new resurrected bodies. Therefore, you will be a better version of yourself, but not the best version of yourself. The best will come later. However, the day you die, if you are a follower of Jesus, you will experience freedom from the curse of sin like never before; every faculty that is human in us will know a freedom it has never

known before. But... heaven is only the rehearsal for what is coming.

Worship is and Will Always be the Culture of Heaven

Creation was made for worship, but because of the curse and sin, worship as we were made to experience it seems like a fleeting shadow. We experience moments of the kind of worship we were made for, even though it is often misplaced. However, in heaven, we will experience worship as we were made to experience it.

Now, let me preface what I am about to say about heaven and worship with something C.S. Lewis said about worship: “We delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.” John Piper, in his book titled *Providence*, reflects on the implications of what Lewis wrote in light of what the Scriptures state,

God’s self-exaltation is utterly different from all *human* self-exaltation. When humans exalt themselves, they call attention to something that can never satisfy the people they want to impress: themselves. No mere human, no matter how exalted, can be the all-satisfying treasure of another human. Nor is such satisfaction of others even a typical human motive for self-exaltation. For humans, self-exaltation is typically a way of getting, not giving—using people, not serving them. But it is otherwise with God.

In exalting himself—that is, in upholding and communicating his glory—God aims to *give* enjoyment to all who will have him as their supreme treasure. And since praise is the appointed consummation of such enjoyment, God is not indifferent to our praise. If he aims at our joy in him, he will aim at our praise—joy’s consummation. He will not limit our joy by discouraging our praise.¹

Throughout the Bible, what we see in relation to heaven is the worship of God. Every glimpse of heaven we get in Scripture is filled with the worship of God. After having had his vision of heaven, the Apostle John sat down to write the book of Revelation for the encouragement of a suffering Church. How the world will end is a footnote in the book of Revelation, the real purpose and function of what John saw was a display of the majesty of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

God the Father Reigns in Heaven

In the book of Revelation, John was ushered into the very throne-room of God where he saw and heard what I am sure he struggled to put into words; the LORD sitting upon His heavenly throne surrounded by twenty-four thrones on which twenty-four elders sat. On each side of the throne stood the great Seraphim who worship day and night, never ceasing in their thunderous praise: “**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!**” These Seraphim have been specifically created for the purpose of acknowledging the essence of God as they cover their faces and feet with two of the three sets of their wings. Why do they do this? They cover their faces and feet because even though they remain unstained by sin, they still feel unworthy to be in the presence of almighty God.

¹ John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway; 2021), p. 55.

We learn from Revelation 4 that whenever the Seraphim acknowledge the glory and honor and thanks that belongs to God, the twenty-four elders fall down before God in humility and they cast their crowns before Him as they declare: **“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”** These elders attribute glory, honor, and power to God because He alone is worthy to receive such tribute (4:6-11).

God the Son is Honored in Heaven

When we come to Revelation 5, we are told of how all of heaven turns their attention to the Lamb of God standing among the elders and angels with all the marks of His crucifixion on a Roman cross. He is the One who had been slain to ransom a people from every tribe and tongue to make them the people of God. But Jesus did not stay dead, we see Him as the Lamb of God standing! So, the angels and the twenty-four elders fall down in worship before Jesus to sing a new song: **“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth”** (5:8-13).

Not only will you witness the angels and elders worshipping both God and His Son, but you will join in with the ransomed nations in worship before Jesus Christ crying out in a loud voice, **“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”** (7:11). And in response to shouts of praise, the angels, twenty-four elders, and the seraphim respond in their own shouts. Just so you know, we are not talking about a few thousand angels, but hundreds of thousands of angels who surround the twenty-four elders and the seraphim... all of them respond, saying, **“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!”** Worship is central and centered, not on us but on the Father and on the Lamb.

The Holy Spirit’s Sustaining Power will be Celebrated in Heaven

In Revelation 15, we discover that worship will not only be about God’s love and the sacrifice of the Lamb, but also about God’s sustaining grace. In chapter 12, we learn that the saints referred to in chapter 15 are those who conquered Satan, not by their might, but **“by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”** What we see in chapter 15 is the celebration of God’s deliverance of the saints and the defeat of His enemies; the deliverance is not deliverance from death but from apostasy. According to Revelation 15:2, the saints **“conquered the beast and its image”**, but they did so only because God sustained them, and for that God is worshiped. The song they sing is the same song sung after Israel was delivered through the Red Sea when Pharaoh and his army was defeated; just as God was faithful in delivering Israel, so God will be faithful in sustaining our faith as we follow Him. God is worshiped for bringing His children faithfully across that celestial sea into His glorious presence.

Another theme we will experience in our worship in heaven will be the celebration of God’s righteous indignation against all those who have mistreated the Bride of the Lamb (the Church). Yes, all of heaven celebrates the majesty of God, the redemption made possible through King Jesus, and the sustaining power His Spirit grants to all who belong to Him, but you must understand that God will be worshiped for all that He is... including His righteousness. When He

pours out His wrath on the nations for the way His saints were treated, He will be worshiped (see 16:5-7); and when the great whore of Babylon is destroyed, we will cry out together:

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants” (19:1-3).

There will be a Wedding in Heaven

When we see in Revelation 19:6-10 is something that we will all experience when all the saints are gathered together in heaven together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. All of heaven anticipates this day; I have read somewhere that all of heaven up to this point is but the wedding rehearsal of the great day when the Bride, that is the Church, will be wed to the Groom. It is said in the Scriptures that concerning the salvation of sinful and rebellious human beings... angels long to look (1 Pet. 1:12). I am sure that as we gather there on that wedding day, the angels will be beaming in radiant joy as the thresholds of heaven shake to their celebratory declaration:

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” (19:6b-8).

Conclusion

You and I were made for heaven because we were made to know and worship God. We were not made for the short life we have been given on this side of eternity; this is why the Bible says: **“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’- yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes”** (James 4:13-14). We were made for eternity; we were created to live forever. What that means is that our purpose is life not death, and that true freedom to live can only be experienced through a personal relationship with Jesus who defeated death by rising from it.

Heaven is NOT a place designed to give you delight instead of damnation, family reunions instead of friendless suffering, perfect health instead of physical anguish, and harmony instead of horror... only. Heaven IS a place where delight, reunions, perfect health, and harmony will be enjoyed, but not as an end in of themselves but instead serve to the obstacles that often obstruct our worship of God.

Jesus died to give us the most delight, joy, and happiness any human can possibly experience because He died to give us God – the highest good we were made to know and enjoy. We were made for Heaven because we were made for God; where He is... there will His people be. This is why the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 3:1-4, **“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory”** (Colossians 3:1-4).

If you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus, then the Kingdom of God is yours. When you set you mind on heaven where your true citizenship is, the scary beasts of this life lose the power to rob you of the joy Jesus purchased for you upon his cross.