

What Will the Kingdom of Heaven be Like?

Author: Larry W. Wilson

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent[change your attitudes and ways], **for the kingdom of heaven is near.**'" -Matthew 4:17(insertion mine)

For many people, the word "Heaven" refers to an ideal place or a state of perfection. Of course, different people have different views on what constitutes perfection and this explains why there is differing opinions about the kingdom of Heaven. The Bible reveals many interesting things about the kingdom of Heaven and you should consider them if you plan on living in Heaven someday. Nothing on Earth is more important than entering the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said, **"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"** (Mark 8:36)

Here are a few of my favorite texts describing the kingdom of Heaven. Review each text and consider the short commentary that follows:

Matthew 5:3 **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

The kingdom of Heaven will be filled with people who are "poor in spirit," that is, humble and teachable. People who will have the heart of a child and the mind of a servant will rule the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus warned His disciples: **"But you are not to be** [exalted above one another with titles] **called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers** [equals]. **And do not call** [a priest or a church leader or] **anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.**

Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' [you must forever remain a student] **for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself** [on Earth] **will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted** [in Heaven]." (Matthew 23:8-12, insertions mine)

Matthew 5:20 **"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."**

A sinner cannot produce the righteousness required to enter Heaven. Period. A sinner can never be good enough or righteous enough to achieve Heaven. Sinners must be born again to receive the garment of Christ's righteousness – a righteous robe which Jesus created for us when He came to Earth and lived a sinless life. Christ gives His righteousness to the people who surrender their will to Him. **"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'**" (Romans 1:17)

Matthew 22:2-14 **"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell**

them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

But they paid no attention and went off— one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.

Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without [putting on the] wedding clothes [which I provided]?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth [much agony].' For many are invited, but few are chosen."

The moral of this parable is quite simple. The wedding guest was thrown out of the wedding party because he assumed his wedding garment (his own righteousness) was good enough. That was a fatal assumption.

Matthew 5:10 **"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

God honors people of integrity. He loves people like Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego (Daniel 3) who stand up and speak up for the right, even though the consequence could be death. God knows that human beings prefer joy and peace over pain and suffering, but God also knows that we live in a world of numerous collisions.

Evil people are constantly causing problems. God looks for people who will stand up for the right though the heavens fall and He is delighted when we put our faith in Him and do the right thing. (2 Chronicles 16:9) The lesson of Daniel 3 teaches us that faith in God means doing the right thing and leaving the consequences in His hands.

This text is a promise. Everyone suffering for the sake of righteousness will have a place in the kingdom of Heaven. **"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. . . ."** (Revelation 21:8)

Matthew 13:33 **"He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.'"**

This parable illustrates the point that once a person has been born again and tasted the joy and peace that comes through faith in Jesus, *every aspect* of this present life will be affected.

Matthew 13:47-50 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This parable affirms a profound truth: Everybody wants to go to Heaven, even the "bad fish." However, many people are unwilling to prepare for Heaven. Jesus said, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."** (Mark 8:34,35)

1 Corinthians 2:9,10 **"However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him' – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. . . ."**

Somehow, verse 10 is often overlooked. The kingdom of Heaven is a real place with houses, streets, vegetation and rivers. It is a lovely place with happiness beyond human imagination. Once sin is eliminated, sorrow, sickness and death will be gone forever. The promise of living there is more precious than fine gold to those who have been *enlightened* by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 7:28 "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

John the Baptist was divinely "set apart" at birth to herald the arrival of Messiah. John was also given the honor of baptizing Jesus. From God's perspective, no one on Earth was greater than John and Jesus drew this comparison to make a profound point: People who may be considered "least" in the kingdom of Heaven will have greater standing in God's sight than John the Baptist had on Earth. **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."** (1 John 3:1, KJV)

Matthew 19:24 "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

For protection from war lords and foreign armies, ancient cities closed their massive gates at sundown. However, most cities had a small door where people arriving after sundown could enter the city and be safe. This small door was known as "the eye of a needle." Getting a camel through "the eye of the needle" was almost impossible.

The camel had to be stripped of everything he was carrying and the animal had to lie down on ground. Then, a team of oxen inside the city would literally drag the camel through "the eye of

the needle." No doubt some camels got stuck and you can imagine the grief that produced. So, the point is simple: Getting people to dedicate their wealth to God's service is more difficult than dragging a camel through a small hole in the wall.

Galatians 5:19-21 **"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."**

This text teaches us two things. First, the sinful nature is drawn toward the muck and mire of "pig heaven." Second, people enjoying "pig heaven" would not be happy in the kingdom of Heaven. If a person enjoys sexual immorality, debauchery, idolatry, orgies, drunkenness and selfish ambition, living in Heaven forever would be worse than hell.

To live throughout eternity in a happy and joyful state, the saints must be free of sin. This is why sanctification is so important. I believe Heaven will not only be a time to worship and sing praises to God, but it also will be a place where we will study new subjects, research God's creations, build homes or work on intricate projects with technologies that humans presently know nothing about. As the saints go about their heavenly business, they will joyfully worship a God who is grander and greater than finite knowledge can understand.

1 Corinthians 15:50 **"I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."**

This text is often mistreated. Some people try to make this text say that everyone in the kingdom of God will be a ghost or a spirit who does not have flesh and blood. Actually, this text says that human beings, in our present mortal state of flesh and blood, cannot live in the kingdom of God.

Therefore, when the time is right, God will give us new bodies so we can live in His kingdom. **"When the perishable [body] has been clothed with the imperishable [body], and the mortal [man who was subject to death is clothed] with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15:54, insertions mine)** Heaven is a real place and we will know each other just as we know each other now. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Revelation 21:1-5 **"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea [or lake of fire]. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.**

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy

and true.'"

God Himself has spoken and His promise will certainly come true. Everyone is invited. Don't miss out! **"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."** (Revelation 22:17)

Larry Wilson