

Touched by an Angel
Heaven: "O The Delights"
August 28, 2011

Introduction: "Bruce Moen is a lot like you. He's never had a near-death experience, nor does he claim any special psychic gift or ability. Yet, he's learned to do some special things. He has freed "lost souls" from their isolated, sometimes terrifying post-death existence; helped them regain free will choice over their own destiny; brought comfort to those left behind when a loved one dies; moved earthbound ghosts to their place in the Afterlife; verifiably explored nonphysical human consciousness and other realities." – courtesy of www.afterlife-knowledge.com

I. What Happens When You Die?

Luke 23:42-43 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

2 Corinthians 5:8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Revelation 14:12-13 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

- Intermediate state: just a fancy name for what happens between a person's death and the second coming of Christ
- We really don't know that much about the intermediate state
- Scripture does teach this:
 - 1. Local – Heaven is a *place*, not a state of mind or being
 - Jesus ascended *somewhere*
 - Not nirvana
 - Not reincarnation
 - Not assimilation into the universe
 - "His brain is in heaven"
 - We too will be in heaven with the Father
 - 2. Immediate – believers are – without hesitation – transported to be in heaven with the Father and Jesus
 - RC doctrine of purgatory has no Scriptural support
 - 1 Pet 3:18; 2 Pet 2:9 require very dubious interpretations that have very little scholarly support
 - Lk 23 and 2 Cor 5 seem to indicate an immediate transfer
 - 3. Conscious – we are "awake" in heaven
 - Psychopannychism – doctrine of "soul sleep"
 - All the souls of the dead sleep or die until the Final Judgment
 - "Fallen asleep" language i.e. 1 Thes 4
 - Against the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul (which the Bible doesn't affirm anyway)
 - Against some exegesis of Lk 16 – Rich man and Lazarus
 - Problems here are Lk 23, 2 Cor 5, and Rev 6 – saints crying out day and night

- from before the throne of God
- We can be assured that we not only go to heaven immediately when we die, but that we consciously rest from our deeds before the Father

How do these facts impact the way we approach death?

II. What Happens When Jesus Returns?

1 Corinthians 15:20-21 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- Final state: theological term for what happens to a person after the resurrection of the dead
- Lots happens when Jesus returns, but sticking as closely as we can to the topic of heaven, we're going to just look at a few
 - 1. Final state of believers
 - Here again we tread into unknown territory
 - Three points:
 - 1. We will have bodies
 - Body and soul will be reunited
 - Paul longs to be “further clothed” in 2 Cor 5:4
 - They will be, like Jesus' body, physically astounding
 - Maybe new properties?
 - 2. We will be sinless
 - We will no longer be privy to the bondage of sin and death
 - We will no longer be *able* to sin
 - 3. We will have eternal life
 - Everlasting life
 - Depth of life as never experienced before
 - 2. Final state of creation
 - It is physical – the Bible is not ascetic and anti-physical world
 - It has been made anew
 - In a *restored* sense more than a substitute sense
 - Rom 8:19-21 – creation groaning
 - Who would care about the earth if it was passing away?
 - Luther: I would plant an apple tree
 - Best way to understand 2 Pet 3:10-13 is apocalyptic
 - The difference is so great that it can only be described as new and the old passing away
 - cf. 1 Cor 15 – spiritual and physical bodies
 - It is very good
 - Creation has not only reached but now surpassed its original state

- Work will be a curse no more
- Disease, pain, and tears will be gone forever
- Every ounce of creation will be holy
- “O day, for which creation and all its tribes were made / O joy, for all its former woes a thousandfold repaid”
- God will be there
 - This may seem obvious, but this is the big point
 - He will be so close that Isaiah can say, “Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.”
 - There will be no more prayer, hope, faith because every good and worthy thing will be realized
 - (It makes it worth having tears if God himself will wipe them away)