

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!

Today is Part 4 and the final part of the series To Heaven and Beyond. We usually get some things mixed up with what happens at death, eternal afterlife, and all points in between. Hopefully in this series some beliefs have been cleared up, errors have been corrected, and other truths brought to light for perhaps the first time for you.

The focus for this last part is the New Creation. It seems to me most of what we think and believe about heaven is actually not found in the heaven to where our souls go at death, but rather is found in the New Creation. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, *“But, as it is written,*

*‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him.’”*

It sounds like there is most assuredly something to look forward to in the coming New Creation of God! Indeed many things. This encompasses our bodies, our activities, and the surrounding world. Let’s start with our bodies.

In 1 Corinthians we also learn, *“So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”* 1 Cor 15:42-44

There will be a material and permanent change in our bodies. Now they are natural. In the New Creation they will be spiritual. Our best guess is that while there will be physical elements to our bodies as we will see in Jesus, they will not suffer the shortcomings we have now. There will be no need for food or sleep, and pain, fatigue, injury, sickness, death, and the like will be unknown since the spiritual is not affected by these elements. This is the sense of the description we get in Philipians.

He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Phil 3:21 The body of his glory is presented to the disciples as we see in Luke. And he said to them, *“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”* And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, *“Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.* Luke 24:38-42

Our new body will be a spiritual body, as it says. However, it will also have substance. Thomas was able to touch Jesus’ body, and here Jesus takes food and eats it. So the good news is we will be able to eat with our spiritual bodies. Jesus says we will also be able to enjoy drink. *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”* And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, *“Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* Matthew 26:26-29 Something we can look forward to in the New Creation is continuing the Lord’s Supper we have here but there it will reach its

culmination, and Jesus will join us at the table with his physical, visible presence and company. In the Old Testament the prophets talk about God preparing a never-ending glorious banquet of fine drinks and rich and tasty foods we will enjoy together in the New Creation. So with our new spiritual bodies we will enjoy food and drink I suspect that will taste far beyond anything we have ever experienced here in the Old Creation.

What else will we do in heaven? To answer that question in the negative, one thing we won't do is be married. *Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.* Luke 20:34-36 We won't have to worry anymore about what gender people identify with or dangerous drugs, surgeries, and procedures to try to change their gender. In the New Creation, it just won't matter! That's good news. The closeness that married people know is a preview of how close we will be with all people in the New Creation. Imagine having hundreds and hundreds of people you will be emotionally closer to than even the best friends you have had now.

Something else we are sure to do which is one of the things we usually think about when it comes to this is praising God. As it says in Revelation, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Revelation 7:12. Thanks and praise of God will continue without ceasing in the world to come. We celebrate when the Steelers win the big game. That comes to an end. The praise and celebration of the goodness of God continues without end.

What about the world in which we will live? We get a glimpse of this in the Book of Revelation.

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. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And 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. He 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." Revelation 21:1-4

In this age we live on earth and God lives in heaven far above the earth. When we die our bodies remain here and our souls are carried to heaven where we wait there in peace for the end of the age. In this reading from Revelation we learn how heaven where we are waiting will come down to earth. As our souls and bodies are joined together once again, so heaven and earth are brought together in a perfect harmony. The place of our dwelling and the dwelling of God are the same. Heaven and earth will be the same place. It makes sense then how other visions of the world to come in the Bible can possibly be true.

*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.*

*The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.*

*They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:6-9*

This passage from Isaiah foretells the peace we will know in the world to come. It talks about little children and nursing children, but I think these express the innocence of that place. If we are like the angels and do not marry, I'm not thinking there will be babies in heaven. Here's another good one Isaiah that makes it sound great.

*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*

*And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.*

*He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 25:6-8*

That sounds like a place where I'd like to be. You, too?

Finally let's take a look at the prophecy from Micah. It's one that's familiar to many. *He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Micah 4:3*

There's a lot more where this came from – far too much to include in such a brief overview. Hopefully it is clear that there is much to look forward to in the New Creation. God bless us and keep us in the true faith until we all enter into that world to come. Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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