INTRODUCTION TO SERIES: IF HEAVEN IS FOR REAL

A. As people who believe in the Bible as God’s truth to us, we believe that heaven is a real and significant place. We’re told to set our mind on things above.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:1-3)

1. One problem is that we know very little about what heaven is like.

B. Our life here on earth is like a mist that appears and is gone compared to eternity. We know our way around earth, and how to navigate life here: relationships, smart phones, taxes, bills. But we often know very little about what our eternal dwelling will be like.

1. This series is not about proving that heaven exists, but asking the question: If heaven is for real, how does it affect my life here on earth right now? Our goal in the next few weeks will be to study what the Bible says about heaven.

We’ll start this series off by looking at:

I. TOP 5 MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN

We get our view of heaven and hell from different sources: t.v., even cartoons, movies, conversations with friends, poems… Here are what I believe are the most common myths and misconceptions about heaven.

A. #1 Heaven is eternal retirement and relaxation.

1. Some people picture ghostly, semi-transparent spirits floating from cloud to cloud.

2. Truth: Work will be entirely effective and fulfilling. We will have resurrected bodies like Jesus. We won’t be like disembodied spirits. Heaven will not be boring!

   a. There will be work, but it will be maximally fruitful and satisfying. It’s work as it should. Heaven is not an eternal retirement with no work. Our faith is not about escaping reality. It’s about inviting God’s Kingdom to become reality where we are.

      Matt 25:21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

3. God created Adam and Eve as His representatives to impact the world around them. God gave the Cultural Mandate (Creation Mandate), an assignment to mankind. They were to fill, subdue, and have dominion (or rule) over creation
Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:28)

a. Adam’s disobedience and his rejection of God’s plan brought sin and death into the world. God sets in motion a **plan for redemption** in order to restore mankind to His original intention.

B. **#2 Heaven will be one long eternal church service.**

1. Will we be singing one hymn after another 24/7 forever and ever. A never-ending church service. We tell people: *Good News! You get to go there! I’ll be there, do you want to go to?* Some people don’t want to go there! Some Christians might not want to go there!

   a. Some people might feel guilty that they aren’t more “spiritual” or get excited about heaven.

2. Truth: There is constant worship in heaven, but we’ll also be doing a lot of things – not just singing.

3. Heaven is a place of great beauty, peace, and joy. God will make everything new. We will want to worship God and we’ll feel the unhindered joy of God’s love flowing toward us.

   a. There will be food, work, recreation, entertainment, government, humor, education,

   b. The Kingdom of God will be openly manifest worldwide affecting every sphere of life (political, social, agricultural, economic, spiritual, educational, family, media, arts, technology, athletics, environment, social institutions, etc).

   *Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.* (Acts 3:21)


C. **#3 Heaven “up there” is our eternal home.**

1. Truth: “Heaven” right now is a temporary dwelling until the New Heaven and New Earth are revealed and joined together. The New Earth will be our eternal home. We will be with the Lord forever as He comes to dwell with man once again.

   *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.* 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.* (Rev. 21:1-3)
a. From that time, God’s dwelling will be with redeemed mankind on earth. We will spend eternity with God in our resurrected bodies on the New Earth, where the New Heaven is joined (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Eph. 1:9-10).

2. This is what God had originally planned, to dwell with Adam and Eve and mankind. Jesus Christ came to restore that original plan and redeem mankind.

*Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. (Ephesians 1:9-10)*

D. #4 Everyone will be rewarded equally in heaven.

1. Doesn’t it only matter that we “get in?”

2. Truth: We get in to heaven by our faith in Christ, but our rewards are according to our works.

*Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

*Rev. 22:12 And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*

E. #5 People go to heaven automatically if they’ve been good enough on earth.

Don’t the good people go to heaven and the bad people go to hell?

1. Truth: We do not go to heaven automatically. No one can be righteous enough to enter heaven.

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)*

*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)*

2. We cannot enter heaven as we are because of our sin which separates us from God. Heaven is not our default destination.

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)*

a. Jesus paid the price for our sins upon the cross and offers us the gift of forgiveness and the gift of righteousness. We receive these gifts by opening to Jesus Christ, Who He is and what He has done.

II. CONCLUSION

A. “Some people are so heavenly minded, they’re no earthly good.”
Truth: The only way we can be earthly good is if we set our minds on heaven and start with the end in mind. We don’t want to put all our eggs in the wrong basket. Everything will be tested by fire. Only what remains will count.

Some people will build and work all their lives and at the end, they will realize that they were building the wrong thing. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Main idea: **Set your mind on things above.**

1. **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** (Colossians 3:2)

   Some of our myths and misconceptions about heaven have resulted in a disconnected Christianity. Heaven has become a whole other world with no continuity with this world and we are left mostly with mystery. We do want to go there, but what does that mean to me today as I’m struggling to pay my bills or working through issues in relationships, etc.?

   **APPLICATION:** Think about heaven often – not as a disconnected world, but God’s Kingdom that is awaiting your openness to affect your life today.

   1. **Heaven is not just somewhere that we’re waiting to get to. Heaven is God’s Kingdom that we’re inviting right where we are today.**

      a. Call it “down” today! (Matt. 6:10). Heaven is coming here! The Kingdom of God, of heaven will touch earth. Heaven is not just future. It starts now.

         *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.* (Matt. 6:10)

2. If heaven is for real, how will it affect how you live this week?

   e.g., *After years of working hard in Dublin for years and years, the owner of a business is looking forward to a vacation in Hawaii. She begins to wear the clothes, listen to the music, and eat the foods. Her business begins to embody everything that Hawaii means to her: rest, relaxation, enjoyment. She does get to go to Hawaii, but it’s not just an escape for her now, it’s become a part of who she is. She and everyone who works for her and comes to her place of business is impacted by the culture of another world.*

   1. It starts now with receiving eternal life. Life is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Eternal life is not you living a long, long time in a place far, far away. Eternal life is an eternal person named the Son of God living in you as the Life.

      *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16)

**Message Series: If Heaven is for Real**

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E. Set your mind on things above. Begin to live your life based out of what that means. We’ll take the next few weeks to unpack what that means.