



What Will We Be Doing When We Get to Heaven? (Part I)

John 14:3: (NASB) *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*



It is pretty safe to assume that almost every Christian looks forward to being in heaven with Jesus if they are faithful to their call of discipleship. While this can be an exciting and positively overwhelming prospect, it is natural that we have a lot of questions about the future. What exactly will the faithful be doing when they get to heaven? How will they spend their time? Many say that the faithful will be continually worshipping God and His son - and there is truth to this. However, there is more - much more. Understanding what the faithful disciples of Jesus will be doing in heaven requires first putting all of Jesus' mission

in order. If we know what he came to do and NOT do when he walked the earth as a man, we will then know what he has yet to accomplish and how his faithful followers will help him later.

Since this is a deep subject that requires a bit of groundwork, it is important to listen to all three parts of this series while using our companion CQ Rewind Show Notes.

We do not know why people think of being in heaven as sitting on a cloud, strumming a harp. We have been to funerals where in the service they talk about the deceased rooting for their favorite sports team or playing the best round of golf in their life. Heaven sounds either really boring or like the best day on earth you have ever had, just over and over again for eternity.

We will look at this topic through the lens of four aspects of the Christian's heavenly reward.



Heavenly Groundwork:

What God's plan dictates must be done as a foundation for heaven.

This is what every Christian must do in the here and now.

Lens 2 through 4 have no particular order, as they overlap with one another:



Heavenly Privilege

Some of the unmerited privileges faithful Christians will be given.



Heavenly Inheritance

Some of the amazing aspects of heavenly life the faithful will own.



Heavenly Responsibilities

Some of the requirements a faithful Christian life will lead to.

Here is the work involved!



Let's look at the first aspect of heavenly groundwork.



Heavenly Groundwork:

What God's plan dictates must be done as a foundation for heaven.



looking through

Lens 1: Heavenly Groundwork

A merciful and just answer to sin and death had to be presented for any opportunity for heaven to be open.

Jesus lays the essential basis for heavenly groundwork:

John 1:29: (NASB) *The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*



This bold announcement was an introduction to what Jesus came to do as the Lamb of God.

Now for some profound details:

1 Peter 1:18-20: (NASB) *¹⁸Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰For he was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.*

These scriptures pour out the power of the *precious blood of this lamb unblemished and spotless*. It is *the blood of Christ*. God set this up *before the foundation of the world*.

This is the foundation - the **Heavenly Groundwork** being laid.

This Lamb obviously had to be sacrificed. Jesus knew what he volunteered for:

Luke 9:22: (NASB) *Saying, The son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.*

This work as the Lamb of God was finished on the cross.

The opportunity to go to heaven was never available before Jesus' resurrection and the ransom for Adam was applied. This is how we know for sure that all of those who lived in Old Testament times and those who died before Jesus, like John the Baptist, are NOT in heaven.



Some seem to believe that Abraham went to heaven because of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, but Jesus himself tells us this is not true. In John 3:13 Jesus said, *No one has ascended into heaven.*

This essential groundwork, the shedding of his blood, was now in place. Yet, Jesus had more work to do. One of the ways we know his work was not finished is that by the time of the cross Jesus had not yet fulfilled all of the ways he was scripturally described.

Let's go back to the Old Testament. Jacob, son of Isaac who was renamed Israel, had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. When Jacob was dying, he specifically gave a blessing to each of his twelve sons predicting the future of their tribes.

Here is the blessing to Judah, the tribe to which Jesus was born:

Genesis 49:9-10: (NIV2011) ⁹You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.



This is a huge promise. There is a lion, a ruler destined to rule ALL nations.

The scepter - meaning the right to rule, the title to all power - stays in the house of Judah.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH JESUS?

 Through the ransom, Jesus "bought" humanity back from the grave. He earned that scepter and became that lion of the tribe of Judah.

Revelation is a highly symbolic book. We will not get into the details here other than to make a specific point:

Revelation 5:3-5,8-9: (NASB) ³And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. ⁴Then I began to weep greatly... ⁵and one of the elders said to me, Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.

We see this drama in heaven. John was weeping because no one could open the book. But one of the elders tells him to stop, as the Lion from the tribe of Judah is worthy - he is able to open the book.

⁸When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb...

...before the Lamb!

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! We have two symbols here - the Lion from the tribe of Judah opens the book, but it is the Lamb being worshipped!





⁹And they sang a new song, saying, *Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals; for you were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

To reiterate, no one could open the sealed book except the *Lion from the tribe of Judah*, who is the *Lamb of God*, showing two aspects of Jesus. Jesus as the Lamb of sacrifice was on the cross. Here Jesus is shown as the powerful Lion and rightful ruler from the tribe of Judah.

Once we see the picture of the Lamb and Lion, now what?

Luke 9:23: (NASB) *And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*



WE FOLLOW JESUS THE LAMB, BUT WHAT IS OUR ASSOCIATION WITH JESUS THE LION?



The lion symbol shows rulership, authority, power and strength. The disciples of Jesus will follow that leadership in the future.

Let's now begin to uncover the relationship between the Lamb and Lion aspects of Jesus' life:

Luke 4:16-21: (NASB) ¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, (and here Jesus begins quoting from Isaiah 61): ¹⁸The spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. ²⁰And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.



This was a solemn occasion. Visiting Jews were often asked to do the daily reading and Jesus read part of Isaiah 61, then quietly closed the book.



WHY DID JESUS ONLY QUOTE A SMALL PORTION OF THIS PROPHECY FROM ISAIAH?



Because he is only quoting what he, as the Lamb of God, was then accomplishing at that time:

²¹And he began to say to them, *Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*

He announces that he was there, fulfilling exactly what he had just read to them. This was a surprise coming from a man they had watched grow up. "You are doing what?! You are fulfilling this sacred prophecy of Isaiah right here in front of us?" There was great power in this prophecy and in Jesus' life, even if those he grew up with did not see it.

This prophecy, in its totality, gives a grand picture of God's plan for all humanity. We will review this Isaiah 61 prophecy over the course of this podcast series.



REMINDER



Heavenly Groundwork:

What God's plan dictates must be done as a foundation for heaven.



looking through

Lens 1: Heavenly Groundwork

Jesus came to us as a man to be offered up as the Lamb of God for the sins of Adam and humanity. This was just the first step in God's plan to open heaven to the disciples of Jesus. *As his followers, we know we must follow him in his path of sacrifice.*

We have to understand that his groundwork opened impossible, unthought of doors that could not have opened until Jesus came as this Lamb of God.

It is really eye-opening to pause and consider that there is so much more to God's plan than just Jesus' sacrifice.

We have seen how Jesus laid the groundwork for Heaven. How do his disciples lay their heavenly groundwork?

The preparation of the disciples for their heavenly destiny has many moving parts. It is important to realize that heaven is not a broadly-promised gift to anyone who speaks the name of Jesus and goes to church. As we will see, heaven is reserved for those who are called, chosen and faithful. Heaven's reward is costly but well worth it!

Let's pick up on the last phrase of the Isaiah 61 prophecy quoted by Jesus: Luke 4:19: (NASB) *To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.*

This was prophetically referencing the calling of discipleship to Jesus: 2 Corinthians 6:2: (NASB) *For he says, at the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you. Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation.*

This is not a 365-day year or a 24-hour day - this *acceptable time* period is the age when the gospel message is being proclaimed - from Jesus' time to the present.

Year: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon - a year, in a wider sense, for some fixed definite period of time

The Gospel Age is the time period when we are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus. This is what his first advent was all about. 2 Corinthians 6:2 is not referring to salvation for the whole world - that comes later!

Before we talk about what heaven will be like, we want a good understanding of what we, as disciples, have to do now in this life in order to get there - what the qualifications are.

REMINDER



Heavenly Groundwork:

What God's plan dictates must be done as a foundation for heaven.



What do we see when we look through that lens?



looking through

Lens 1: Heavenly Groundwork

In this "acceptable time" and "favorable year of the LORD," there are many aspects to discipleship that need attention and developing. Every follower of Jesus needs these in order to be equipped for heaven.



SPECIFICALLY, WHAT GROUNDWORK DO WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH IN ORDER TO BE PREPARED FOR HEAVEN?



Groundwork: Put your old ways aside and embrace the spiritual guidance and value of God's word:

1 Peter 2:1-5: (NASB) ¹Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Put aside who you were and start something new. This picture of being like newborn babies longing for the pure milk of the word means to start our life over with a spiritual focus. An earthly life does not know or even care about such things.



Groundwork: Follow the leadership of Jesus. This is contrary to worldly wisdom:



⁴And coming to him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is different from how many organized Christian denominations try to maintain power and control over people both in the pulpit and in politics. Following Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, means our life as his footstep followers is sacrificial - we seek to deny ourselves, as opposed to seeking to run or fix this broken world.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CONTRAST:



OUR PURPOSE AT THIS TIME IS NOT TO FIX THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD.



Groundwork: Accept the responsibilities and changes to our lives and outlook that come with discipleship:

1 Peter 2:9-10: (NASB) ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



We started out these verses in 1 Peter with longing *for the pure milk of the word*. Now Peter is proclaiming we are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession...* This is an enormous development!

This opens a major understanding into what heaven will be like. They also list several privileges and responsibilities that are given to us here and now but will also stay with those who go to heaven.



Groundwork: Live what you have been given! Be an example in your behavior. Doing so brings eternal glory to God:

1 Peter 2:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹²Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

We said earlier how true disciples are about sacrificing and not taking over the world. Here we need to make sure the world does not take us over!

Groundwork: Realize that heaven is difficult. We need to strive for it, as it is worth every effort!

Remember when James, John and their mother requested a future kingdom favor from Jesus:

Matthew 20:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But Jesus answered, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They said to him, We are able. ²³He said to them, My cup you shall drink; but to sit on my right and on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.*

Just qualifying to get into heaven is work! It takes dedication in all aspects of our life for that goal. It is not just a free pass to all who believe in Jesus like many churches teach.

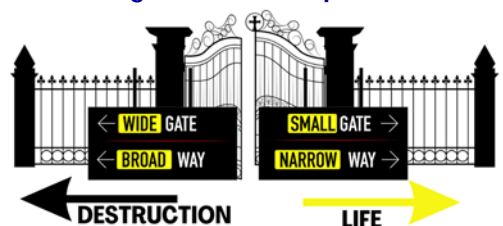


This is a fascinating passage that tells us something profound we often overlook. Jesus is gracious and entertains this question about sitting on his right and left hand in heaven. He knows they have no idea what they are asking. First, he asks if they know what they are asking and they assure him they do. He knows they do not, but in his compassion knows they will figure it out. Then he says this is not something he can dictate; it is up to his Father - this was beyond Jesus' authority. This position is so lofty that only his Father in heaven could know this.

We are called to heaven - think of the depth and the power and the privilege in that!

Jesus was bluntly open about the challenges of being a true disciple - he does not mince words:

Matthew 7:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*





What will we be doing when we get to heaven? If we do not put the heavenly groundwork in place, we are not going at all! The work has to be done so that God can say as we are told in Matthew 25:21, *Well done, good and faithful servant.*

Understanding what is to come for faithful disciples is a true motivator to do and be what we need to do and be:

Romans 8:15-17: (Rotherham) ¹⁵*For ye have not received a spirit of servitude, leading back into fear, but ye have received a spirit of sonship, whereby we are exclaiming - Abba! Oh Father!* ¹⁶*The spirit itself, beareth witness together with our spirit that we are children of God;* ¹⁷*And, if children, heirs also - heirs, indeed, of God, but co-heirs with Christ, - if, at least, we are suffering together, in order that we may also be glorified together.*

There are a lot of details here, but let's focus on *suffering together now, in order that we may also be glorified together later*. Let's not confuse the two: the suffering, difficulties and trials are all now. The glory is later. If we are seeking glory now, we are running the wrong race. We are not then running for a heavenly calling; we are running for something else (Ego? Prosperity?) because it is not about glory here and now. Now is not the time for glory; it is a time for sacrifice. This is the heavenly groundwork that Christians must be looking towards.



Heavenly Groundwork:

What God's plan dictates must be done as a foundation for heaven.



looking through

Lens 1: Heavenly Groundwork

Fulfilling the earthly life of Jesus was no easy task, as Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. Fulfilling the life of a disciple of Jesus is no easy task either. Disciples are also called to a sacrificial life because they walk in Jesus' footsteps.

The other side of the equation is heavenly glory!
Faithful suffering now brings glory later!

The point of going through this groundwork is so that we understand what it takes to be prepared to be called to heaven. We cannot answer what it will be like in heaven until we first put all these things in place.

It should be no surprise that faithfulness to discipleship is such a hard road. When is anything truly worthwhile ever easy?

We now have the groundwork of this life in place.
What will we be doing when we get to heaven?

As we begin to peek through the doors of heavenly glory and responsibility, let's remember that no matter how hard the difficulties of this life are, they are but a moment in comparison to eternity. What we will find is an inspiring assurance that God's plan has ALWAYS had all of the details of the heavenly call clearly and precisely in hand.



The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world - Revelation 13:8.
We appreciate how God knew what He was doing from the very beginning.

Let's reread from Romans and add verses to begin looking through our future heavenly lenses, those of Heavenly Privilege, Heavenly Inheritance and Heavenly Responsibilities:

Romans 8:17-19: (Rotherham) ¹⁷And, if children, heirs also - heirs, indeed, of God, but co-heirs with Christ, - if, at least, we are suffering together, in order that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸For I reckon that unworthy are the sufferings of the present season to be compared with the glory about to be revealed towards us; ¹⁹for, the eager outlook of creation, ardently awaiteth the revealing of the sons of God.

There is definitely glory here. It is coming! We will talk about this more soon.

The other future aspect of this text is focused on verse 19, the waiting for *the revealing of the sons of God*.



Heavenly Privilege

Some of the unmerited privileges faithful Christians will be given.



looking through
Lens 2: Heavenly Privilege

The true disciples of Jesus will be plainly revealed to ALL of God's creation.



DOES THIS MEAN THE FAITHFUL CHURCH OF CHRIST IS LITERALLY INTRODUCED TO ALL OF THE BILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF RESURRECTED HUMANS?



We do not know exactly how it works but there is a dramatic revealing!

HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN? WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Let's base our search for answers on the prophecy from Isaiah 61 that Jesus only partially quoted. This prophecy becomes the centerpiece for understanding what faithful Christians will be doing when they get to heaven.

First, let's reread what Jesus quoted:

Isaiah 61:1-2: (NASB) ¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ²To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD...

So far, so good - Jesus accomplished all of this:

- ✓ He DID bring the good news of the gospel message to all
- ✓ He DID encourage and give hope to the brokenhearted
- ✓ He DID proclaim redemption to all who are captive to sin and blindness
- ✓ He DID proclaim a calling for men and women to become Christians, to follow him in the announcing of all of this good news.



But then in the synagogue, Jesus stops short of quoting the full verse of Isaiah 61:2. He stops with *to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD*, rolls up the scroll he was reading from and sits back down, declaring this has been fulfilled. But he left out the next phrase: *And the day of vengeance of our God*.

Did Jesus suddenly forget how the scripture ended? Absolutely not! This was all in preparation for the rest of the prophecy to be unfolded and fulfilled at a later time. Meaning, this day of vengeance had not happened yet and was not a part of his first advent. Therefore, he could not declare that it had been fulfilled.

Here he is in the synagogue, talking to the average person of the time. However, at the end of Jesus' ministry, he did reveal to his disciples, his inner circle, that this time of trouble, this *day of vengeance of our God*, was yet coming. This happened at the end of Jesus' ministry and was only revealed to those select few because this was not what his ministry was about. His ministry was about the fulfilling of all those other things he talked about like the good news, binding up the brokenhearted, and so forth.

Let's look at this time of trouble:

Matthew 24:21-22: (NASB) ²¹For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²²Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Notice how *the elect* - the true disciples of Jesus - are referenced. This is an unfolding of heavenly privilege!



Heavenly Privilege

Some of the unmerited privileges faithful Christians will be given.



looking through

Lens 2: Heavenly Privilege

Those of Jesus' true disciples who live at the End Times are granted a privilege of being on hand and faithful under stress. **Their faithfulness directly affects world history!**

Their faithfulness is integrated into how world history unfolds *...but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short*. The setting is during the time of trouble, here at the end of this Gospel Age we are in right now.



SOMEHOW THE ELECT ARE A PART OF SAVING THE WORLD?



God's plan will unfold at just the right time, and there will be faithful Christians still here on earth during the time of trouble. God will cut short the world's ability to destroy itself because of those individuals who are faithfully living out their lives.

There is a lot of pressure on us to be faithful!



Let's get back to the prophecy continuing with the rest of the parts Jesus specifically left out:

Isaiah 61:2: (NASB) ...*To comfort all who mourn.*



HOW DOES JESUS COMFORT MOURNERS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE END TIMES WE ARE TALKING ABOUT?



He comforts through his disciples!

This is one of Jesus' final statements before he was raised to heaven:

Matthew 28:20: (NASB) *Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

This is an important piece of groundwork. Jesus is getting ready to ascend to heaven. His faithful followers are watching him, and this is one of the last things he says before he leaves their sight - *I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* We cling to this promise. We live at the end of the age, and we know Jesus is with us by this promise. We said Jesus comforts those who mourn through his disciples. We know from his last promise that he is with us to do that comforting work.



THE WORLD WHILE IN PAIN WAITS – FOR WHAT? HAVE WE NOTICED HOW AWFUL IT IS OUT THERE?



Mankind is looking for relief, hope and answers.

We have the answers! We MUST preach and thereby give hope:

Matthew 24:14: (NASB) *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

We know we will not be able to convert all people now, but we can give hope. The idea of giving hope in general is such a powerful tool. If we can give hope to someone who feels hopeless, we can change their life. If we change that moment, that moment can change their direction.

If Jesus is with me *to the end of the age*, what is my life showing others?

This revelation of the sons of God begins with the clarity of the faithful ones' message of hope and comfort here and now. It will be completed with the revealing of the whole body of Christ, by their being made manifest, however it will be done, to the entire resurrected creation.

Is this YOUR message? Or are you preaching bad news to non-Christians which is the opposite of the good news for all? We went over this scriptural teaching on WHY we preach the gospel to others in Episode 1191, and it is NOT to convert the world at this time.



Biblically clarifying WHY we preach the gospel to others

This is an incredible privilege to be present at the end of the age to be able to comfort the world - and even to help save it from self-destruction through proving faithful as a follower of Christ.

Isaiah continues building the end time events as they transition into the kingdom work of Christ:

Isaiah 61:3: (NASB) *To grant those who mourn in Zion (the true church), giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

How do we get to be called *oaks of righteousness*? Let's look at all these elements to see what they are and what they represent.

- *A garland for ashes*: Some translations say *beauty for ashes*. Ashes are associated with death and mourning. For the true Christian, a redeemed life now is being given beauty for ashes. Once true Christians die, the ashes of their death are transformed into an eternal life later.



- *Oil of gladness instead of mourning*: Anointing happens after a period of mourning in sackcloth and ashes. Oil in Scripture often represents the holy spirit. The disciples of Jesus are given God's spirit now in this mourning-filled world. This spirit is the promise of a heavenly inheritance later.



- *Mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting*: Some translations say *a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*. We receive a symbolic covering of gladness to replace the weakness of sin and loss.



We see a partial fulfillment of this prophecy now - our lives are changed for the better by trying to live our lives as true Christians. But this is a transitional picture. We know there is a larger fulfillment in God's future kingdom because these *oaks of righteousness* are given *beauty for ashes*, *oil of gladness* and a *garment of praise*.

These verses show the dramatic contrast between being in an earthly state versus the incredible privilege of being in a heavenly state. The contrast of beauty/ashes, gladness/mourning, praise/fainting shows the value of being a true follower of Jesus.

This portion of the prophecy alludes to a part of God's plan that is unique to the end of the age:

1 Corinthians 15:51-53: (NASB) ⁵¹*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,* ⁵²*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* ⁵³*For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Those who died in Christ before his second advent were asleep in death and are resurrected in heaven at the sound of *last trumpet* - his return. However, the Apostle Paul tells us something additional - *I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* For those who die after the return of Jesus, theirs is an instantaneous transition from the moment of death to their heavenly resurrection to be with Jesus.



Heavenly Inheritance

Some of the amazing aspects of heavenly life the faithful will own.



looking through

Lens 3: Heavenly Inheritance

The true followers of Jesus inherit a completely unique resurrection. It is to a higher plane of being than others, and at the end of the age, transitions from the sleep of death to an instantaneous birth to life.

This is an inheritance we cannot earn and is indescribable. From the misery of humanity to glory in an instant - how can we even begin to wrap our heads around it? What a gift this is!



From Heavenly Groundwork to Heavenly Beings:

By God's grace and Jesus' sacrifice, all of the developmental work of this present Christian age brings unfathomable fruitage. The disciples of Jesus will be privileged to be revealed to the entire world, and their very presence at the end of the age will alter history and shorten disaster! Further, they will inherit a resurrection to immortality!

It is breathtaking to see how the privileges and inheritance of Jesus' disciples unfolds into such a glorious heavenly magnitude.

So far, we have seen amazing heavenly privileges and inheritance, but what about heavenly responsibilities?

We have only scratched the surface regarding anything heavenly. The details that will follow in the next segment and beyond will provide opportunities to vastly deepen our appreciation for God's plan, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the unearned, grace and favor-filled position that true discipleship provides. We cannot earn it, as this position is FULL of grace. We should be in awe of this heavenly inheritance every moment of our lives.

Let's get back to those trees in Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:3: (NASB) *...So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*



Heavenly Responsibilities

Some of the requirements a faithful Christian life will lead to.



looking through
Lens 4: Heavenly Responsibilities



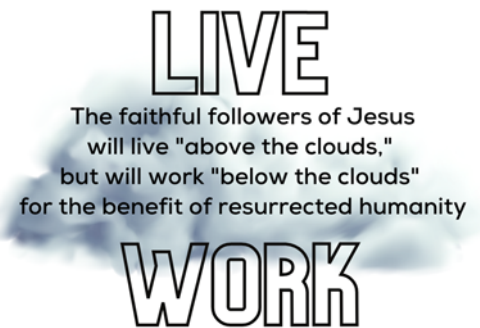
Having been lifted out of sin through redemption, Jesus' disciples will be symbols of **godly strength and righteousness.**

Where are these trees planted? We have continually talked about the disciples' destiny of heaven, but this seems like an earthly picture. And the prophecy will continue with a strictly earthly fulfillment.

Q HOW DOES AN EARTHLY PICTURE WITH AN EARTHLY FULFILLMENT WORK WITH THE TRUE DISCIPLES LIVING IN HEAVEN?



Part of the heavenly inheritance and responsibility of Jesus' true followers is the work of reconciliation and restitution of the resurrected world of mankind. They have a heavenly home but are working "below the clouds." Yet their home is "above the clouds."



Jesus' disciples are clearly given a promise of a home in heaven:

John 14:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.* ²*In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.* ³*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*


This is a clear promise from Jesus that his true followers have a home in heaven.

These faithful ones will be spiritual beings with the incredible gift of having a divine nature - not dependent on anything external for life:

2 Peter 1:4: (NASB) *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

1 Corinthians 15:40,42-43: (NASB) ⁴⁰*There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.* ⁴²*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;* ⁴³*it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*

Q IN ROMANS 8:17-19, WE READ HOW THE CO-HEIRS OF CHRIST SUFFER TOGETHER IN ORDER TO BE GLORIFIED TOGETHER. DOES THIS DESCRIBE THE SAME GLORY?

 Yes! These verses in 1 Corinthians dramatically compare weakness and power, perishable with imperishable, dishonor, unlovely - with a glorious spiritual body. These qualities between the earthly existence and the heavenly inheritance could not be more different.

This is a promised position of power, led by Jesus:

Matthew 26:64: (NASB) *Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*

Jesus was the Lamb on earth and takes on the role of the Lion in heaven. As the Lion, here he is at the right hand of God Himself.

On earth, Jesus did not assert all of that power we see that he now has in heaven. Lion versus Lamb - we have to understand both of his roles in order to understand how his true church fits in. We follow the Lamb in sacrifice; we will follow the Lion in his righteousness, glory and leadership. We will see this unfold in Parts II and III of this series.




The members of the true church are the *mighty angels* of Jesus and work the works of power that Jesus himself gives to them:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7: (NASB) *For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.*

Jesus' faithful church follows the Lion and are a part of whatever he does with his royalty and power.



HOW DO WE KNOW THESE *MIGHTY ANGELS* OF JESUS ARE HIS TRUE CHURCH AND NOT LITERAL ANGELS AS WE KNOW THEM FROM SCRIPTURE?

 We know the word translated *angel* from Greek to English means "messenger" and does not always mean the created, spiritual kind of angels in heaven, such as those who visited Abraham, Moses and Mary.

We know the angels in the above verses are the true church because this phrase *the Lord Jesus...with his mighty angels* or *the angels of Jesus* appear a few different times in Scripture.

One example is in 1 Timothy 5:17-21. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy about the respect elders deserve within the church arrangement. They are leaders and should be respected, *worthy of double honor*.

1 Timothy 5:21: (NASB) *I solemnly charge you (Timothy) in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of his chosen angels (messengers)...*

Who were these angels or messengers? Those elders who had the responsibility to lead. There is precedent in Scripture to show that the angels or messengers of Jesus are his true followers who have been given jobs of responsibility.

The word for *chosen* (also translated as *elect*) in 1 Timothy 5:21 is only used in the New Testament to describe the faithful church class. This would make this text an outlier, as we have no other reference to the created spiritual angels in this way.



Establishing spiritual and human natures as separate and distinct

Humans do not turn into actual angels when they die.

Being *revealed FROM heaven* helps us see that heaven is their origin (their home above the clouds) and earth is their mission (below the clouds).

Let's get back to the trees of Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:3: (NASB) *...So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*

The word for *oaks* (*trees* in other translations) means something solid that can be counted on for strength. These strong, full-grown trees represent true, fully-grown and matured disciples. They are "planted," placed by God Himself to reflect His own righteousness.



HOW ARE THEY PLANTED? SPIRIT BEINGS DO NOT TURN INTO LITERAL TREES, SO THIS HAS TO BE METAPHORICAL.

Oaks/Trees: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon definition includes: a strong man, leader, chief



The Bible does not give the details. We know these faithful ones will be examples of righteousness. Their presence will be seen and felt by resurrected mankind. They are involved and present in the restitution process of the earth somehow or other.

This planting shows us that this prophecy is fully transitioned into the kingdom work of Christ. These disciples pictured as strong, planted trees are fixtures in this kingdom and follow Jesus who went before them.

Wherever Jesus goes, they follow. When he comes to usher in his kingdom, they come with him to inaugurate that kingdom.

Isaiah gives us this same future picture of the kingdom:

Isaiah 11:9-10: (NASB) *⁹They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰Then in that day the nations will resort to the Root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and his resting place will be glorious.*

This imagery gives us the sense of Jesus as the strong and unchallenged Lion of the tribe of Judah.



The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of Jesse, and we read earlier about the Root of David - these are just synonyms for the glorified Jesus. He came from the tribe of Judah, through the line of Jesse (David's father) and of King David himself.

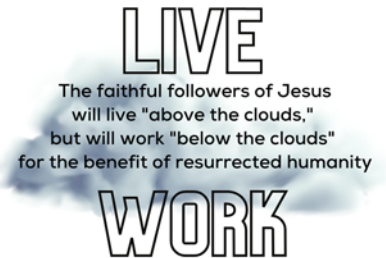
This helps us to see the expansion of the role of Jesus. He was the Lamb of God here on earth, but now we see all these aspects of his power.

Jesus had already told his followers they would inherit the earth:

Matthew 5:5: (KJV) *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

Christian Questions has a very active Facebook Group and when we asked our theme question about what we will be doing in heaven, one of our listeners felt strongly that this text, *blessed are the meek...* proves the faithful do not go to heaven, since their inheritance is the earth. Earth means land, the ground, our planet. This corresponds with many of the Old Testament promises given to Israel about inheriting land.

However, we have seen that while the meek will inherit the earth, they will live in heaven. Parts II and III of this series will go into the details of the restoration, rehabilitation and reconciliation work that will be done for the benefit of the resurrected mankind.



Jesus' followers inherit heaven as their home, but the earth will be their workplace. An inheritance might not be where someone lives. Jesus told us in John 14:2 that he was preparing a place for us in heaven, but he also says he has work for those called *oaks of righteousness* on earth. Their influence is in the reconciliation work on earth. We will cover this in more depth in the next episode.

The imagery of being like a planted tree is one of strength and security:

Psalms 1:1-3: (NASB) *¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law, he meditates day and night. ³He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

Another analogy of a tree! We need to study how to be a valuable spiritual plant with strong roots anchored in the streams of God's grace and truth, yielding mature fruit from our branches.

This prophecy in Isaiah 61 is powerful. We are dwelling on these *oaks/trees of righteousness* because it starts to give us a picture of what our heavenly work will look like.

All of the Heavenly Groundwork done by Jesus' followers in this age translates into everlasting fruitage from their lives later:

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) *²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



We need to work at developing this *fruit of the spirit* in order to be faithful, fruitful trees. If we put that “fruit” into practice now, it will be crystalized in our characters later.

REMINDER



Heavenly Reponsibilities

Some of the requirements a faithful Christian life will lead to.



looking through

Lens 4: Heavenly Responsibilities



Jesus’ followers will become *symbols of righteousness* in the earthly kingdom. While the earth will certainly not be their home, its godliness will be their responsibility as they work under the leadership of Jesus.



From Heavenly Groundwork to Heavenly Beings:

Spiritual development at the expense of one’s own will produces extraordinary dividends for Jesus’ disciples. They are privileged to be revealed to the world with Jesus, and they play a role in the ending of the time of trouble. They are given a lofty and unique resurrection and will be symbols of godly strength and righteousness for all of the world to see.

What will we be doing when we get to heaven? While we have not yet finished the rest of the Isaiah 61 prophecy, so far, we can say: Become a tree! The symbol of becoming *trees of righteousness* is a profound place to start, which is why Isaiah establishes that first. We will build on this in Part II, so do not miss it!

Doing the work now helps us to understand what the privilege later can and will be if we are focused on following diligently in Jesus’ footsteps through a life of sacrifice.

The results are beyond glorious!

*So, what will we be doing when we get to heaven?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on October 3, 2022

Ep. 1249: What Will We be Doing
When We Get to Heaven? (Part II)

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1248: What Will We Be Doing When We Get to Heaven? (Part 1)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1248-heavenly-work/>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What is your vision of heaven? What are the four lenses we will use to look at this topic?
2. What was necessary for the opportunity of heaven to be opened? When did God set up the plan for the salvation of the world? How do we know Jesus understood what was expected of him? When was Jesus' role as the Lamb of God finished? (See John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:18-20, Luke 9:22)
3. How do we know there was no one who went to heaven prior to Jesus' death and resurrection? Why do we know the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus does not indicate Abraham is in heaven? Did Jesus have more work to do after his death on the cross? How do we know? (See Luke 16:19-31, John 3:13)
4. What does Jacob's blessing to Judah tell us about another role of Jesus? What was the role of Jesus as the Lamb? What is *our* role in following Jesus the Lamb? What does the Lion of Judah symbolize? (See Genesis 49:9-10, Revelation 5:3-9, Luke 9:23)
5. In Luke 4, why did Jesus only quote from part of the Isaiah 61 prophecy? What does that prophecy picture in its entirety? Jesus' sacrifice opened heaven for whom? (See Luke 4:16-21, Isaiah 61:1,2)
6. The "favorable year" and the "acceptable time" - what do these prophetically reference, and from what time period? (See Luke 4:19, 2 Corinthians 6:2)
7. As followers of Jesus, what groundwork do we need to accomplish during our lifetime? Explain the five steps in the Rewind. What should we expect in our lives now? What happens in the future? (See 1 Peter 2:1-5,9-12, Matthew 7:13-14, 20:22-23, Romans 8:15-17)
8. When reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue, why did Jesus stop before reading the last phrase of verse 2 - "And the day of vengeance of our God"? What is the effect of having true Christians faithfully living out their lives during the time of trouble for the world? How will Jesus "comfort all that mourn" at this time? How does or should your life reflect Jesus is with you? (See Matthew 24:14,21-22, 28:20)
9. What are the three gifts for the "oaks of righteousness" in Isaiah 61:3? Contrast an earthly life with a heavenly one. What is our incredible heavenly inheritance? (See 1 Corinthians 15:51-53)
10. Where is the "home" of Jesus' true followers in the kingdom? What will their nature be? Where will they work? (See John 14:1-3, 2 Peter 1:4, Matthew 5:5) What should we be doing now to prepare for heaven? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
11. What is *our* role as Jesus takes up the role of the Lion in heaven? What is the symbolism of the oaks/trees? What are some of the names of Jesus? (See Matthew 26:64, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, Isaiah 61:3, Psalms 1:1-3)