

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

ECCLESIASTES 12:7 • TV32A

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By

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Ecclesiastes 12:7

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

I am speaking to you on the subject **“WHAT I KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN AND WHAT I KNOW ABOUT HELL.”**

I hope you will listen carefully to the message. Get your Bible and take notes if you would like to. Solomon wrote: *“Then shall the dust return to earth as it was and the spirit shall return to God who gave it. Man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets.”*

Paul the apostle wrote: *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment.”* And the great Richard Baxter who ministered the Gospel two or three hundred years ago made this tremendous statement: *“I preach as a dying man to dying men. I preach as one who may never preach again.”*

Now, I’ve made a study of the subject of heaven and the subject of hell, what I know about heaven and what I know about hell. You ought to be interested in this message today because every one of us, every one of us, one of these days, must keep that appointment: *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.”*

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And every sermon I preach ought to be preached in the light of death, judgment, and eternity and every sermon you hear ought to be heard in the light of death, judgment, and eternity. There is life after death, heaven for some; glory and eternal reign with Christ, and for others eternal hell and condemnation.

There was a preacher sitting with a friend out in the garden one day, out in a flower garden. They were discussing Scripture, discussing death and discussing life after death. The friend looked at the preacher and he said:

“Reverend, wouldn’t it be wonderful if somebody from up there would come down here and tell us what it is all about.” The minister replied, “Someone did, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came down here and told us what it is all about. It is right there in His Word and all you and I have to do is look into the Word and pray that the Holy Spirit will give us an understanding of what is written.”

Now, I am concerned about death and judgment and eternity. I’m surprised; I’m totally amazed that more of you are not concerned about this subject because you are so vitally and personally involved in this subject, eternal heaven or eternal hell.

Now, let’s look at some things and let me, just as an outline, give you what I know about heaven.

First of all: I know this, that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven!

I’m certain of that. There’s not a doubt in my mind that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. In **1 John chapter 5:11** John wrote, “*This is the record;*” (this is God’s Word, this is a faithful saying; this is worthy of acceptance by all men, God almighty hath declared it).

“*This is the record that God hath given to us (we don’t deserve it, but God by His grace and mercy) hath given to us eternal life.*” That’s heaven, that’s eternal glory, that’s divine life. “*This is heaven that God hath given to us eternal life (heavenly life) and this life is in his Son.*”

It’s not in the church, it’s not in good works and it’s not in the law. “*God hath given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath eternal life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*”

“*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him, (trusteth Him, receiveth Him) should not perish but have eternal life. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.*” So, this life is in Christ.

Adam lost three things in the Garden of Eden.

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First of all: He lost the way to God! After he sinned, after he fell, God put him out of the garden and closed the gate and put flaming swords and cherubim's guard the entrance. Adam was cast away from God.

Secondly: He lost the truth! Adam believed a lie and rejected God's truth. Our Lord said: *"I've come in my Father's name and you don't believe me. Let another come in his own name and him you will believe."* It's been that way since the fall. Men readily accept a lie and reject the truth and Adam lost the truth. He lost the ability to recognize the truth.

Thirdly: He lost his spiritual life! Oh, he lived on physically for many years but he died spiritually. God said: *"In the day ye eat thereof ye shall surely die"* and Adam died.

Now, in Christ we have all three of these things restored, the way to God, the life of God, the truth of God. Christ said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."*

All of this is restored to the sons of Adam who have Christ, who know Christ, who receive Christ and are in Christ, for He obeyed the perfect law for you and for me: *"He who knew no sin was made sin for us."* He took upon Himself sinful flesh and obeyed the law in order that He might reckon to us or impute to us a perfect standing before God.

Man fell and man broke the law. In order for man to be justified, man had to keep that law. *"What the law could not do because of the weakness of our flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh."*

Christ became a man just like you and me in human flesh and *"he was tested and tried and tempted in all points, yet without sin."* Why, in order that man might be justified, in order that man might have a perfect righteousness.

And more than that; He took our guilt: *"He took our sins in his own body on the tree"* and there the justice of God was satisfied, both God's law in His life and God's justice in His death was satisfied.

That way we can be accepted by God; that way, you and I, sinners, born sinners by nature, by practice, by choice; we can be received by God. We can be taken to heaven. So, the only way to heaven according to this Book is Jesus Christ; He is the way. He said that: *"I am the way."* Can words be any plainer than that?

The church is not the door to heaven. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, laws, rules, regulations, statutes, standards, any of these things, (just name any of them) while they are means of grace and while God does bless these things as a means of grace, the only object of faith is Christ.

The only way to God is Christ. The only foundation is Christ: *"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ the Lord."* He said: *"I am the door. By me, if any man enter in he shall be saved."* He's not one of the doors; Christ is *"the door."*

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He said: *“I am the bread of life. I am the water of life. I am the rock.”* You see, *“He is our Passover.”* It’s Christ, the whole of salvation from beginning to end is Christ. *“He’s the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the author and finisher of our faith.”* That I know!

Go on preacher; what else do you know about heaven? Well, I know that Christ is the way.

Secondly: I know this. I know heaven immediately follows death for every believer!

Now listen to me; there is no such thing taught in God’s Word, not anywhere from Genesis to Revelation; it is not there, there is no such thing taught in God’s Word, no such thing as purgatory; it is not in God’s Word.

There is no such thing in the Word of God as soul-sleep, a person dies and his soul goes to sleep and it awakes one of these days in a time when he will wake up in glory. That’s not taught in God’s Word.

There is nowhere in God’s Word a “halfway house to heaven;” it is not there. These are the inventions of men. You say: “Why would people invent things like that?” Well, there are three reasons:

First of all: To enslave people to a religious system, that’s right!

Secondly: To deceive men; those who are deceived want to deceive others; misery loves company!

Thirdly: To profit, it is to profit materially and financially from keeping people in the dark, enslaving them and keeping them in the dark!

That’s a sad situation but Paul warned about that, he said: “Preachers and religious leaders are hucksters. They make merchandise of the sons of men.”

There are many people in the ministry for money, for personal gain, for filthy lucre; that’s so! If they can enslave people and deceive people and profit from people they will invent anything on earth. But these things aren’t taught in God’s Word.

When our Lord was dying on the cross and the believing thief said to Him: *“Lord, remember when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* Our Lord said, *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*

Our Lord didn’t go to purgatory, His soul didn’t sleep, He didn’t go to a “halfway house;” our Lord Jesus Christ went back to the Father and that thief went with Him. He said: *“Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.”*

Well, let’s go on in the Word, Paul said this: *“I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.”* If I depart from you I am going to be with the Lord. What are you

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teaching? I am teaching what the Word of God says, that immediately when a person dies his spirit goes to be with God.

The body decays and we put it back in the ground that goes back to the earth but the soul doesn't die, the soul doesn't sleep, and the soul doesn't go to purgatory, it goes to be with Christ.

Listen to Paul again: *"To be absent from the body is to be (be what?) present with the Lord?"* Now, wherever Christ is that's heaven. Wherever Christ is that is where His people are when they die.

Then in **2 Corinthians 5:1**, Paul said this: *"We know, (these are things you can know, if you will open your eyes and God will open your heart) we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle,"* (this tent; this body is like a tent, and frail tent. There's nothing frail as a tent).

And when this tent is dissolved or when it falls, *"we have a building."* The soul is not floating around up there in space with no covering and no boundaries. *"We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* That's where it is!

When our body dies, when this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building. Where is it? It is in the heavens, not in purgatory. It's not in a "halfway house;" it's in the heavens.

While we are at home in this body of flesh, we are absent from the presence of the Lord but *"we are longing to be absent from this body and to be present with the Lord."* I know that Christ is the way to heaven and I know that immediately upon dying here we will wake in His presence.

Thirdly: I know that the body will be raised; this body will be brought from the ground!

Now, there were those in Paul's day who questioned the resurrection of the dead. And I can understand why natural men would question such a thing as the resurrection.

When I was in the Navy in World War II we buried some of our friends at sea and the fish ate their bodies and other fish ate those fish and now they are all gone. Where is the body?

Then, we put people in the grave and in 50 years there is nothing there. You can take up all the remains in a nickel paper bag but God says this body is going to come out of the ground or out of the sea: *"The sea gave up the dead which were in it. Death and hell are giving up the dead which were in them."* The graves are going to open.

There were people in Paul's day who could not believe this miracle as they do not believe much of God's Word. *"But, if there be no resurrection of the dead;* Paul said: (now you listen to me) in **1 Corinthians 15:** *"If there be no resurrection of the dead then Christ is not risen."* He said: *"If there be no resurrection of the dead our preaching is all in vain."* It hinges on that; it's that important.

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“If there be no resurrection of the dead your faith is vain.” Now you think about that! If there be no resurrection of the dead we are false witnesses of God and that’s dangerous. *“If there be no resurrection of the dead, you are yet in your sins.”*

And Christ said: *“If you die in your sins, you can’t come where I am. If there be no resurrection of the dead we are of all men most miserable but we shall rise.”* Christ said, *“because I live you shall live.”*

Now, watch this; **in 1 Corinthians 15:35**, but Paul said: *“Some will say, how are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?”*

Now, there’s not anybody listening to me hasn’t been to the cemetery with a loved one or a friend and watched them lower that casket into the ground and cover it with dirt. I know you have come away from that cemetery saying this: *“Well, how are the dead raised and with what body do they come?”*

Want an answer? Right here in **1 Corinthians 15:35** and Paul replies, the seed of corn which you sow in the ground (many of you are farmers, and you who aren’t farmers have a little garden in the back yard) you know what it is to sow a seed of corn.

That seed of corn which you sow in the ground does not spring up, it does not bring forth, it does not live until you put it in the ground and it rots and it dies. And after you put it in the ground and it rots and it dies, then it springs up.

And the seed that you sow is not in the body of corn that is going to come up. You sow a little old wrinkled, shriveled seed, grain of corn. You put it in the ground and it rots. And then after a few weeks it comes out a beautiful, firm, strong, living, green stalk of corn. That is corn. You planted corn and corn came up. What a difference, what a difference!

One of these days they are going to take my body to the cemetery if God grants that I live a little longer and it’s going to be whole. It’s going to be raised new: *“It’s going to be sown (be buried) in corruption. It’s going to be raised in incorruption.”*

“It’s going to be sown in dishonor and raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power (and strength).” *“It’s sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body.”* Do you see that? You planted corn and you got corn but what a difference, what a difference!

You planted a shriveled, wrinkled, dead piece of grain. And coming out of that was a juicy, green, living, stalk of corn bearing many fold more grains than you ever put in the ground. And Paul said that’s the way the dead are going to be raised. This body is planted and it is coming forth with a new body.

Fourthly: Right here is another thing I know about heaven, I know that we will retain our identity!

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Now many questions are going through many hearts right now while I am speaking: “Will we know each other in heaven? Will we remember our days on the earth? Will we be the same person?”

I’m Henry Mahan and you who are listening to my voice today; you know your name and who you are. Will we be the same persons in heaven that we are here? The answer to every one of those questions is emphatically yes, no question about it.

We will know each other. We will retain our identity. We will be the same person. We will remember life here on this earth.

First of all: Will we be the same person in heaven that we are now?

Of course we will. When our Lord was transfigured with Elijah and Moses; Elijah and Moses had been gone from this earth for several hundreds of years. Well, who were they when they appeared with the Lord? They were Moses and Elijah. They never changed identities. They were the same men they were when they left.

Lazarus died and was buried. Three or four days later Christ raised him. Who was he, Lazarus? He was Lazarus when he died and Lazarus when he came back. Christ Jesus our Lord brought him back and he was still Lazarus.

Let me ask you this; the Scripture says that we are going to praise Christ eternally for saving us from our sins, what sins, the sins here on this earth, our identity in Adam and our identification with him, our evil thoughts, evil deeds, evil words, and the things that we have done in breaking the law?

How are we going to thank God for saving us from our sins if we don’t remember them, if we don’t anything about it? How are we going to praise the Lord for saving us if we are not ourselves?

You know, in Revelations it says: *“The song of the redeemed in heaven is unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins.”* We remember His death, His burial, and His resurrection, *“who washed us from our sins.”*

The person who was born on this earth, lived on this earth, died and was buried and rose again and is present with the Lord, our sins; *“he washed us (saved us) from our sins and made us kings and priests unto God.”*

Our bodies will be like Christ. *“Beloved; now are we sons of God,”* through Christ and by faith in Christ. *“And it doth not appear what we shall be.”* In other words, it doesn’t yet appear what kind of body we are going to have in glory.

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I can tell you a little bit about it but not a great deal about it because I have never seen a glorified body. The disciples did; they saw the Lord after He arose from the tomb. And it says: *“We will be like him.”*

They were in the upper room that day and our Lord appeared to them and they were frightened and He said: *“Don’t be afraid; fear not.”* They thought it was a spirit. They had seen him crucified and buried and they thought now standing before them was a spirit.

He says: *“Reach out and touch my hand.” A spirit doesn’t have flesh and bones as ye see me have.* He said, *“Have you got something to eat?”* They had some honeycomb and a piece of fish and they gave it to Him and He ate before them.

That’s the kind of body we are going to have. That’s the kind of body; it’s going to be a body without pain, a body without old age, a body without fear and doubt, a body without suffering, a body without tears, a body without sickness, a body without death, eternally young, in the very image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now then; what do I know about hell? This is an unpleasant subject. I would much rather talk about heaven than talk about hell. I’d rather think about people preparing to go to glory than preparing to hear Christ say: *“depart from me I never knew you.”*

I don’t enjoy preaching on hell; I enjoy preaching about heaven. I’m longing for the day when we shall be with the Lord and we shall enjoy the uninterrupted fellowship and communion with our Redeemer.

And I tremble to think of anybody related to me or friends of mine or in my audience or congregation ever perishing in the pits of hell. But, it’s a reality.

Our Lord said there’s a place called hell. *“There’s a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”* Our Lord said: *“The rich man died (the unbelieving man died) and in hell, he lifted up his eyes.”*

Now, the average preacher never gets beyond talking about the fires of hell. And I will be honest with you and without fear; I’ll say unto you, I don’t know a great deal about fire in hell. I don’t think really that’s the problem, I really don’t.

I know the rich man said: *“I’m tormented in this flame,”* whether it is figurative or literal language; it really doesn’t matter because there are some things that make up hell that are worse than a physical pain; that’s right!

There are several things about hell that our Lord pointed out in this passage of Scripture in **Luke 16**. Now, you get your Bible and look at it.

First of all: He said, Hell is a place of memory!

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The rich man cried: *“Father Abraham; send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my tongue; I am tormented in this flame.”* Abraham replied, *“Son, remember.”*

Do you know that there is nothing as tormenting as memory, “oh, if I had only done this, if I had only done that?”

That Sunday or that Tuesday or that day when that preacher was preaching about salvation and eternal life and knowing the Lord and being delivered from sin, if I had only listened to him, that’s all I would have had to do. The Scripture says: *“He that believeth on the Son hath life,”* “if I had just listened to him.”

I believe in hell that people are going to remember every sermon they ever heard (every truthful sermon). I believe they will remember every prayer that was ever prayed, every song they ever heard sung; they will remember these things. That’s what Abraham said: *“Son; remember, remember.”*

Then hell is not only a place of memory, it’s a place of truth realized too late. You know, hindsight’s a good thing but it was not very profitable; it’s not profitable at all.

Now in hell this rich man said: *“Father Abraham, I’ve got five brothers on the earth. Send Lazarus back to preach to them, to preach to them.”* Preach what to them? Preach the Gospel.

Wait a minute now! Do you mean you believe the Gospel? There’s nobody in hell who doubts the inspired Word of God; they know it. There’s nobody in hell who doubts that Jesus Christ is the only way to glory. They know that now.

There’s nobody in hell who doubts at all that the church can’t save; they know it can’t save now. They know these little easy decisions; belief and walking an aisle and shaking a preacher’s hand won’t put sin away. They know it now, now that they are in hell, you see. Its truth realized too late.

Secondly: And then another thing; hell is unfulfilled lust!

Now, a man who has a terrible appetite for drinking and drunkenness; he can find some relief. He can get a bottle and knock himself out. And the man with a horrible appetite for drugs; he can give himself a shot or some type of drugs and take the easy road.

And a man with a terrible appetite for lying can lie. A man that likes to swear and curse can swear and curse. People of this earth, all human flesh can find some outlet but there’s no outlet in hell.

The Scripture says: *“He that’s filthy; let him be filthy still. He that’s unrighteous; let him be unrighteous still.”* But, no outlets for all of these fleshly lusts; they will still be there.

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Now the believer has a problem with the flesh but one day he will be done with that, this flesh will be annihilated, cast aside. But, the unbeliever is going to keep his flesh; he's going to keep his flesh. It's going to be cast into hell.

Thirdly: Then hell is separation from God!

That's the worst part of hell. It's not the fire. It's not what we call physical suffering. It's to be separated from all love. God is love. There is no love apart from God. There's selfishness and personal and vain glory, but there's no real love. God is love.

To be in hell is to be separated from God and never in any degree or any love or light, "*God is light.*" That's the reason hell's darkness, outer darkness, unparalleled darkness, unimaginable darkness because God's not there.

In hell there's no joy. Nobody laughs in hell. Hell is separation from God and hell is eternal. He said: "*Between us and you there's a great gulf fixed. Nobody can come from you to us or from us to you.*"

That's what I know about hell. I know it's a memory. I know its truth realized too late. I know its unfulfilled lusts. I know it's separation from God and I know it's eternal!