

Series: *Heaven: Security. Beauty. Glory.*

Message Title: *The Activity of Heaven*

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Scripture: Various Scriptures

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Introduction

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this... Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” —C.S. Lewis

I deeply desire for us to live a life that matters and to do more than occupy several footprints of space on this planet. We were made for much more and there will come a day when and where your earthly days will have eternal significance.

“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who

are eagerly waiting for Him (Hebrews 9:27-28 ESV).

Though it seems far off and to some “far fetched”, knowing our future destiny determines our daily activity.

But what about the activity of Heaven? What will we do in Heaven? How would you answer if given a test on “futures” in Heaven? Before you do, let me take a few moments to confront and challenge some of the common attitudes and assumptions about Heaven.



Confront Our Earthly Prejudices About Heaven

Prejudice = any preconceived opinion or feeling, either favorable or unfavorable... a feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason; in particular, those of a hostile nature, regarding an ethnic, racial, social, or religious group.

Your attitude toward someone or something determines your response to it: food, people, places and experiences.

1. Heaven is Bland and Boring

Some people see Heaven as being a bit of a sterile environment—some think it lacks strong features or characteristics and thus, not interesting. Do you think of Heaven as having no color, no flavor, and as being somewhere out there— all white and all “sanitized”.

“I don’t believe in an afterlife, so I don’t have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever torture of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.” —Isaac Asimov

Isaac Asimov: Russian born, immigrated to U.S., known as American writer and professor of biochemistry at Boston University. He was known for his works of science fiction and popular science. Asimov was a prolific writer, and wrote or edited more than 500 books and an estimated 90,000 letters and postcards. His books have been published

in nine of the ten major categories of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

Some think Heaven will be boring because they think it will monotonous—one long church service that never ends.

“Our belief that Heaven will be boring betrays a heresy—that God is boring. There’s no greater nonsense. Our desire for pleasure and the experience of joy come directly from God’s hand. He made our taste buds, adrenaline, sex drives, and the nerve endings that convey pleasure to our brains. Likewise, our imaginations and capacity for joy and exhilaration were made by the very God we accuse of being boring. Are we so arrogant as to imagine that human beings came up with the idea of having fun?” —Randy Alcorn

The greatest LIE in all of human history: “Sin is exciting and God is boring.” Sin makes life painful and empty, but righteousness satisfies and fulfills.

2. Heaven is Formal and Stuffy

Some people believe everyone in Heaven will be upright and uptight. No! We're going to wear robes, not ties!

See Revelation 6:11; 7:9,13; 22:14

No one will be going around chanting, "How are you today, friend?"

And the reverence of Heaven does not mean silence! It's not a library or a place marked by formality.

"Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a **loud** voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!'" (Revelation 5:11-12 ESV).

In the Guinness Book of World Records, the loudest crowd roar at a sports' stadium was 142.2 dbA and was achieved by fans of the Kansas City Chiefs at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 29, 2014. The roar was recorded with eight seconds

remaining in the first quarter. The Chiefs defeated the New England Patriots 41-14.

3. Heaven is Soft and Fluffy

Some think Heaven is a place where we “rest in peace”—the idea of lazy, sleepy, never really up-and-going, just sitting around polishing halos and plucking harps. But the truth is Heaven will be an active place. We will have work to do that will express our worship.

“Our pictures of Heaven are dull, platitudinous and syrupy; therefore, so is our faith, our hope and our love of Heaven.”

Heaven won't be misty and ethereal, but rather, it will be life in HD quality, activity, vibrancy and experience. It is the greatest, all consuming, interactive and experiential reality you have ever known—nothing virtual about Heaven, just REAL!

What on earth will we do forever in Heaven?

I've searched a variety of books, articles and even sermon archives to learn more about

what others have said about the activities of Heaven. I also tried to search and synthesize the Scriptures' teaching and want to encourage you to contemplate and consider these five activities:

Contemplate Heavenly Activities for Ages Yet to Come

While the concept and content of Heaven are found throughout Scripture, the book of the Revelation provides a "central operations" of resource and supply concerning the place called Heaven.

1. Worshipping

"After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne. And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald... And whenever the living creatures

give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created'" (Revelation 4:1-3, 9-11 ESV).

The current scene of Heaven provides a glimpse of what awaits in the future activity of Heaven. We will be caught up and enraptured in the joyous wonder of the glory of Christ. This is worship—fully attentive and fully absorbed in the person of Jesus Christ. We do this now with earthly idols: cars, teams, hobbies, girls and guys.

Whenever you have something you love, you are always wanting to know just a little more about them and feel closer to them.

We will see, understand and know the "worth" of Christ and His glorious work for us in Heaven.

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’” (Revelation 5:9-12 ESV).

“There is no Heaven without Jesus.”

Jesus is the only hope of Heaven for us and will be the centerpiece in Heaven for eternity. This is not something small, but something greater than I can express. It involves awe, wonder, gratitude, joy, praise, excitement and absolute fulfillment.

“God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him.”

“The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. **They cast their crowns before the throne**” (Revelation 4:10 ESV). —adoration

2. Serving

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence... No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him” (Revelation 7:15; 22:3 ESV).

Far from inactivity! Heaven is going to be a busy place!

The word in each text is the same, *Latruero*, from which we get the word, *liturgy* = public work. It includes serving, worshipping and surrendering to the will of God.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,

which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1 ESV).

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9 ESV).

We are called to be “priests in light”—this was a reference to a Jew, “shekinah” glory of God. We will serve the Lord with glow and gladness. We will serve the Lord’s purpose in eternity.

3. Resting

We tend to think of rest as sleep, but biblically, it is more like peace. Heaven will be a place where we never tire and where rest remains because there is no agitation, anxiety, fatigue or anger.

“And 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!”
(Revelation 14:13 ESV).

This life is one of wrestling, but the coming kingdom of God is filled with rest

In Hebrews 3 and 4, God speaks of an abiding “rest” for His people made possible by Christ. We will not be living in perpetual inactivity, but we will be “at peace” effectively active—living in your “sweet spot” and doing it without resistance.

“Heaven is rest not from work but from opposition, from the exhausting effort that comes from fighting against those powers and forces which would, if they could, stifle the life of God in the soul. The rest of Heaven is not the rest of something that has wound itself down to stillness; it is rest from endurance against evil.” —Paul Helm

4. Ruling

Yet not only the worth of Christ, but we will understand and embrace His wisdom and judgment. In Heaven, justice will rule.

“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are Your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed” (Revelation 15:3-4 ESV).

There will be confident assurance that God has brought justice and God’s judgment is sure, final and true. So many things in this life we cannot reconcile or resolve, yet part of the wonder of Heaven will be to live in absolute security and peace. Instead of being victims, we will rule with Him in His goodness and righteousness. I can’t fully explain this, but we are “joint heirs with Christ” and in Heaven we will share responsibility and authority God intended from the beginning of creation.

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents;

here, I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" (Matthew 25:21-23 ESV).

"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities'" (Luke 19:17 ESV).

"Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6 ESV).

God will honor and reward faithfulness even when it has been overlooked and under recognized on earth.

I cannot speak of the worship of Heaven and all the joys found there without addressing the fearful reality and yet the sure outcome of God's judgment and enduring consequence.

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done... And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire... And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death’” (Revelation 20:11-12, 15; 21:6-8 ESV).

5. Celebrating

“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy;

at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11 ESV).

Heaven will be filled with celebration; this is the contrast to the cries and shrieks of hell. We will gather and sing! Eat? Jesus ate with His disciples in His glorified body (see John 21). There are many references to feasts, celebrations and food in the Bible.

“For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes... You are those who have stayed with Me in My trials, and I assign to you, as My Father assigned to Me, a kingdom” (Luke 22:18, 28-29 ESV).

Could this be only spiritual? Sure, but references to banquets, feasts and celebrations make us wonder.

Food is more than functional. See Revelation 19—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I plan to eat and have coffee after dinner because I don’t have to worry about sleep! We’ll laugh too. “If you are not allowed to laugh in Heaven I don’t want to go there.” —Martin Luther

And we will dance. As a teenager, Joni Erickson Tada enjoyed riding horses, hiking, tennis, and swimming. On July 30, 1967, she dove into Chesapeake Bay after misjudging the shallowness of the water. She suffered a fracture between the fourth and fifth cervical levels and became a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the shoulders down.

“I haven’t been cheated out of being a complete person—I’m just going through a 40-year delay, and God is with me through that. Being ‘glorified’... I know the meaning of that now. It’s the time, after my death here, I’ll be on my feet dancing.” —Joni Erickson Tada

“Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”
—C.S. Lewis

In the end, the question is not whether you know about the activity of Heaven, but whether the activity of Heaven is known and experienced in your heart today.