

In My Father's House II
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Lorain Avenue Church of Christ (12/24/2023)

Good Morning ...

One of our hymns asks the question, "Why did my Savior come to earth?"

You know the answer, right? Why? The hymn answers the question, "Because He loved me so."

In **John 3:16** we read, "For God **so loved** the world ... that He gave His only begotten Son. That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The Father loved us so very much that He gave up His only Son so that we could live in Heaven with Him forever.

Jesus Christ loved us so much that He willingly obeyed the Father, sacrificing His life for us, so we could go to Heaven one day.

Now, we know there is absolutely no way impurity and sin can exist in Heaven with God. In our Father's House.

And the only way you or I could be clean enough, pure enough, to live there was for Christ to give up His body on the cross and shed His innocent blood. That was the redemption price for our sins. For our transgressions.

Hebrews 7:26 says that Jesus Christ was holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sin.

From the very beginning, it was God's design that the men and women He created should one day go to Heaven and live with Him forever.

And so, Jesus Christ came to earth and shed His blood to make it all possible. We owe the Father and the Son so very much.

I know that you know and understand all of this very well. We rehearse it now so that it will be in the forefront of our minds as we pick up the study we began last Lord's Day

Last week our lesson title was, "**In My Father's House.**" Our lesson title for today is "**In My Father's House ... Part 2.**"

We covered a lot of ground last week. The lesson is up on our website both in audio and video format. So, I won't backtrack very much. You can view the lesson or listen to it on the website or with your Congregate app.

Here are the main things I wanted you to take away from our first lesson.

I wanted you to have a new mind set. I wanted you to have a shift in thinking.

I would rather you not be thinking about yourself as a human being that has a limited lifespan, and then life as you know it ceases, and then some strange things, at least unfamiliar things, happen. And then finally, hopefully, you are fortunate enough to end up in Heaven one day.

The Bible does not leave Christians in such a semi-knowing state. In such an uncertain state. Unquestionably, believing that Heaven exists, and that Christ died so we can go there after we die, gives us solid hope.

Nor do I want you to think that when you die you go directly to Heaven, or directly to Hell. The Bible does not teach that at all. Some people may initially be deflated by this. "I always thought I'd go straight to heaven to see loved ones when I die." Yet what the Bible teaches is richer in comfort, joy, and hope.

The Bible tells us a lot more about the journey to Heaven than we often realize. And it IS a journey.

The more we know about the journey, the greater our faith, hope and joy. The more we know, the more we savor the richness of other Bible passages. The more we know, the greater our ability to refute false doctrine.

It is a journey wherein God escorts you from birth, to becoming a Christian, to maturity, to death, to Hades, through Hades, to the resurrection, into a new body, and then at last, into Heaven forever.

Perhaps the greatest mind shift that needs to be made is how we perceive ourselves versus how God sees us.

When we examine ourselves in a floor length mirror, what we see is essentially how most people perceive themselves. Bill is that human body that needs his hair combed. On reflective days, Bill may ponder where he'll be when He dies.

But what did we learn last week? We learned that Bill became Bill when God formed him in the womb and gave him a human body during conception and birth. You became You when God formed you in the womb and gave you a human body.

As YOU have grown, You are still You. The body that You are wearing, the body you borrowed from God, has grown with you. You have learned as you have aged from birth. You have been taught by your parents and others. You have been instructed in the Bible, the Word of God. You are more knowledgeable. Wiser.

You have learned about right and wrong, good and evil. You have learned to discern right from wrong. Learned that you must DO right and not do wrong. Learned, by practice, HOW to do right from wrong.

Your belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God has led you to obey the Gospel in baptism. With your sins cleansed and having become a child of God, you have set your sights on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. "Seated" means that Christ is ruling. You believe with all your heart that Jesus will return one day to take you home to Heaven. This is Your hope. This grounds You. This is Your anchor.

YOUR hope. YOUR anchor. Not your aging body's hope and anchor. YOURS. You and your body will soon part ways. YOUR body, the one God made for you and loaned you at conception and birth, will quit on you at some point.

When that happens, angels will carry YOU to Hades to rest beside Abraham and the faithful of all ages. The Gospel of Luke, Luke 16:22 explains this to us. YOU will rest in Hades while Your body returns to the dust of the ground from whence it came.

"Why Abraham you might ask?" when so many have been faithful. Romans 4:16 tells us that the promise of Heaven through Christ Jesus is for "those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

Now hear this! This is very important! VERY! You must have obeyed the Gospel to be carried away to Abraham's side when you pass from this life . 2 Thessalonians 1:8 tells us that God will punish those who do not obey the Gospel of Christ. In Acts 2:38 we read that all have been commanded "to repent and be baptized in order to have their sins forgiven." It is not a suggestion; it is a commandment.

To remain on the journey to Heaven, YOU must have been baptized. In baptism YOUR sins are forgiven and YOU become a child God. YOU must be a child of God to call the House of Jesus' Father the House of YOUR Father as well.

As an aside, it is disturbing to consider how many people assume they can just slide on into Heaven without a thought as regards to God's instructions on purifying themselves from sin and becoming heirs to His great and precious promises. While this is not a sermon on baptism, a gospel sermon is never NOT about baptism. This is one of the things that makes the Lord's church unique.

Realize, now, that it is dangerous to play the odds, so to speak, on how long your body will sustain YOU in this life. Many people say, "Well since I'll probably live to 85, I've got time to get my act together." This is a human tendency. And a risky one.

Once YOU have reached the age in YOUR life where you know you must be baptized to have eternal life, YOU need to do it without delay. YOUR body may become ill. An accident or an act of violence may rob you of your body; rob you of your borrowed earthy life-support suit, so to speak. And then where would you be? YOU?

If you are a child of God and have lived righteously, angels will carry you away to rest with Abraham in Hades. We learned last week that Hades is the name given to the holding place where YOU will rest with the faithful of all ages until Christ returns to call YOU back to bodily life. In a few passages of Scripture, this state of rest and comfort with Abraham and the departed faithful is called "Paradise."

Notice that I said, "back to bodily life." You needed an earthly body to live in this life before death. You did not need a body in Hades. I know. I really know. None of us can fathom ourselves without a body. It is one of the mysteries of God. And it is also one of the keys to grasping our spiritual nature and our relationship with God.

But you WILL need a body when called back to your new life. You will need one to live in Heaven, 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 tell us so. At the end of this earthly life, you will go to be at rest with Abraham in Hades, the unseen place where God takes

care of YOU until the resurrection and Judgment. Yet YOU are still YOU. The mature version of the YOU that was born into the world back in the past.

When Christ returns, He will call all who are in Hades back to life. ALL. YOU included, of course. Some will still be alive at His return. The numbers are staggering. If Christ were to return right now, seven billion would still be living. As to the number of individuals without bodies in Hades, who could say. All who have lived and died since the beginning of time. The number of those bowing their knee before Christ when He returns, the resurrected and those who were still living, will be staggering.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8-10 says, that "We are well pleased to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." The passage also says we are to "make it our aim to be well pleasing to Him." And why? "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

The resurrection and the Judgment.

If you have become a child of God and have lived faithfully while in your earthy body, You will complete your Journey on to Our Father's House where you will live forever in peace and joy, around the throne of God. Your inheritance. Your Reward.

The conversation regarding those who choose not to become a child of God while in this life will take place in another lesson. While a story of justice, and we all are crying out for justice in the world today, it is not a happy story for some. It is a story of choices and consequences.

I want to close our lesson for today.

This is a lot to bite off and chew. And I want us to take some soak time with it. We went back over a number of points with different languaging. We stretched ourselves beyond last week's lesson.

In the next two lessons I want to address two topics. One, "Who Will Be in MY Father's House?", and two, "What If I Miss My Father's House?"

Isn't it wonderful that the Bible allows us to see beyond the tomb?

1 Peter 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

For YOU.

"In My Fathers House ... If it were not so, I would have told you"

In allowing us to see beyond the grave, the Bible teaches us that “who” we are in life is “who” we will be after death; and “who” we will be in Heaven.”

YOU, YOU, and YOU.

We have been given a specific identity and we will keep that identity for all eternity.

Thank you for your kind and patient attention.

We will now extend the invitation of Christ to become a child of God in baptism, having your sins washed away. The baptistry is ready.

This is also an opportunity for us to pray with you if you have fallen away and need to return to God in repentance and prayer.

If we can assist you, please come forward and occupy a seat up front, while together we sing a hymn of invitation and encouragement.