

Heaven: The Life Beyond

“Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated...Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” – Paul 60 A.D.

Part one: “Job’s Knowledge of the Next Life”

Scripture: Job 19.23-27

Subject: Our journey to discover the details about Heaven begins in what some say is the oldest book of the Bible. Long before Moses wrote the Pentateuch. (Hebrew: “five books”) Job, a contemporary of Abraham, someone, perhaps Job himself, wrote this amazing summary of Job’s life’s experience with God. Job is best remembered for his struggle with suffering. His name is almost synonymous with patience. James even referred to Job’s patience in his New Testament letter (James 5.11). Non-Christian religions sight the patience of this man. But Job also had a keen insight into the life after death. These verses may not be familiar to most, but they are our earliest record of a biblical understanding of Heaven. Job’s spiritual insight into life after death provides for us an additional foundational pillar for our belief in the resurrection. This theme is repeated over again throughout Scripture. Mary and Martha were very well versed in this Old Testament truth of the resurrection. When Lazarus died, Jesus’ response to them was “your brother will rise again.” They replied with, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” (John 11.23-24).

Survey: How much did Job know about Heaven and the life beyond the grave? Like all books of the Bible we are given only a small portion of the historical events. The life of Jesus, for example, could not be fully recorded in thousands of books (John 21.25). In the four Gospels we have only a synopsis of Christ’s life and ministry. In the same way we have only a brief abridgement of Job’s life and even less about his full understanding of Heaven. What we do have though is consistent with the rest of Scripture and it provides us with the outline for our faith in the resurrection and the life thereafter.

Spotlight: Who was this ancient patriarch named Job? Job was a righteous servant of God who lived in Arabia somewhere around 1520 to 1200 BC. The book, which bears his name, is about him, but the author remains unknown. There are many references in the book that suggest that Job lived during the age of great patriarchs such as Abraham (Job 1.15, 17; 9.24). When Job referred to God he used the word Yahweh and the word Shaddai, the Almighty. These references to God confirm the idea that Job pre-dated the formation of the Hebrew nation. The fact remains the same that this is the oldest historical record of a God and man relationship. How they communicated is unknown. There were no written records for Job to read (19.23-24). But his book is filled with wisdom and the human struggle with seeming injustice, suffering and pain. Through it all, this book gives us a wonderful example of God providing redemption, grace and mercy for his righteous and faithful servant. This helps us to understand in part the reason of an eternal Heaven for the righteous.

Substance:

1. Job Knew The Real Meaning of Life: 1.20-22; 2.7,9,21

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there (death). The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord (Yahweh)” (1.21).

Job, as philosopher, reduced life to a very simple formula. Job exercised complete trust in the sovereign control of all things. As far as Job was concerned he had no power over the divine will. He resigned himself to not know all the mysteries of life, but trusted in the One who was in complete control.

- A. He came into the world with nothing.
- B. He knew that he would leave it all when he died.
- C. He knew that everything he had came from the Lord.
- D. He knew the Lord could take it all away.

2. Job Knew That Suffering Was A Part Of Life Experience:

“Man, who is born of woman, is short lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.”

Here is one of the first indications of our understanding the reason for a Heaven for those who trust in God. Human suffering is inevitable. It is inescapable brought on by the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3.1-24). Job’s suffering brought on many questions, but unfortunately there is never an answer for why. From a mere human standpoint suffering seems unjust. What happened to Job cannot be the model for all suffering. Job in the end had all his fortunes restored (Job 42.10). This is certainly not the case for others who suffer. Job, therefore, was not the example of how God works in

human suffering. It is, however, an example of a man who suffered and trusted that in the end God would somehow vindicate him.

3. Job Resigned Himself To Death: 19.23-24

“Oh, that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in the rock forever.”

- A. At this point in the book Job is on the verge of death. His innocence cannot be proven to his friends. Job looked to the future. He desired his story be written and never forgotten. He left everything to be judged after he was gone. Proverbs 10.7 states, “The memory of the righteous is blessed.”
- B. “This will be written for the generation to come that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord” (Psalms 102.18).
- C. “If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes” (Job 14.14). Job saw that hopelessness prevailed unless there was another life beyond the present one. He saw his life a mortal struggle. But he would be patient until this life was over and he would experience a change. This change (14.14b) for Job was yet future. Though Job did not have a completely developed understanding and idea of the resurrection, he did have the basic essentials. He would live again and his human suffering would cease.

4. Job Knew Redemption Was Indispensable And The Resurrection Was Inevitable: Job 19.25-27

- A. Job illustrated his belief in the resurrection by the felling of a tree. *“For there is hope for a tree, when it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoot will not fail. Though its root grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant” (14.7).*
- B. Job believed that his Redeemer, literally Vindicator or Defender, would stand on the earth and right the wrongs permanently. Only God could do such an act. Redemption was personal to Job. “I know,” indicates that Job knew his Redeemer. The word *lives* meant that not only was He alive, but that He lives continually or forever.
- C. Job knew that his body would decay, but he believed that there was a future resurrection where the human body with all its weaknesses would be changed. Once again Job did not detail the resurrection, but rather he factually stated its reality.
- D. Job expected to see God in every conceivable way. “Yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold and whom my eyes will see and not another” (19.26-27).
- E. Job knew that his resurrection would place him in the presence of His Redeemer and Advocate. His understanding of heaven was limited, but he knew that he would be with God in the resurrection. “Even now, behold my witness is in Heaven and my Advocate is on high” (16.19).

5. The Facts About Job And How They Relate To Us Regarding Heaven:

- A. These facts lead us to the discovery of why there is a Heaven. The reason for Heaven is to vindicate the righteous and remove all traces of suffering as a result of the Fall. Redemption has always been God’s plan for mankind. God’s design is to deliver us from the curse of sin (Galatians 3.13; Revelation 22.3 “There will no longer be any curse.”). Job cried out to God for vindication for his suffering. “I know that my Defender, Redeemer, Vindicator is living forever.”
- B. Throughout the Bible the theme of redemption shines brightly in the midst of darkness, despair, suffering and pain. All of which are a result of the fall of man in the Garden. Every reference of Heaven in the New Testament includes either a direct or indirect hint of humanity’s suffering and human failure.
 1. John 14.3 “In my Father’s house are many rooms.” Over-crowded conditions existed in the poverty-laden country of Israel and in most of our modern world.
 2. Every miracle of Jesus was in some way a relief for human suffering and misery.
 3. Second Corinthians 4.17 states, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight (the balancing of the scales) of glory far beyond all comparison” (See also: Philippians 2.8-9; Matthew 20.20-23; Job 14.1-2; Revelation 21.4; 1 Peter 1.3-5, 6-7; 4.13).
 4. “For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12.5,7).

Summary: Romans 5.17, 21 teach that Adam transgressed and lost it all. Jesus died to redeem us all “so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ.”