

Introduction

Today, I'm going to address something that's occasionally mentioned in the church but rarely emphasized and almost never developed as a topic. The result is that most Christians know very little about it. That's ironic though because it's probably the most important part of the gospel to most of them. What I'm talking about is heaven and that's what I'm going to preach from the passages I read.

What We Will Be

I start with what we will be in heaven – a resurrected body. The Bible teaches that at the Second Coming of Jesus, He'll give us a resurrection body that is just like His was. It also reveals many facts about it. Let's examine five of those in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49.

First, our resurrection body is a continuation of our earthly body. Notice the word "it" in verses 42-44 and to what it refers, our earthly and resurrection bodies jointly. It's "sown" and "raised", Paul says. That language shows that our earthly body is the seed of our resurrection body. One of the church's most celebrated creeds, *The Westminster Confession*, states just that. It says, "**All the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other.**" Notice the word there "self-same." Our resurrection body will be this body we have now transformed. As one author puts it, when Jesus comes again, He'll reverse the dissolution of our cells, reknit our molecules, and rekindle our amino acids. As I look at my hand, therefore, I can rightly say that my earthly hand will one day be my resurrection hand. Our resurrection body, in other words, is a continuation of our earthly body.

Second, Paul says about our resurrection body in verse 42 that it is imperishable. That means that it will be impervious to decay. The health and strength of our bodily tissue in heaven won't diminish over time. We won't age and weaken in other words. No more iron poor blood, arthritis, high blood pressure, and so on. Imperishable also means that it will be

impervious to destruction. It can't be harmed. Superman, without his vulnerability to Kryptonite, is a good analogy of this. Our resurrection body can't be bruised, broken, cut, torn, or damaged in any way.

Third, our resurrection body is glorious, verse 43. That means it will function perfectly. It will be flawless and fully efficient. Take plaque, for instance. The blood in our earthly body has fat, cholesterol, and calcium content and likely will in our resurrection body as well. The difference is that content won't cause plaque buildup in our resurrection arteries. They will always have 0% blockage, which means no heart attacks. Our pulmonary system and every system in our resurrection body will function perfectly. They will be flawless and fully efficient.

Fourth, according to verse 43, our resurrection body is powerful – as opposed to our earthly body, which is weak. Think of this in terms of our senses. Dogs can smell and hear things you and I can't. Or bald eagles can see things you and I can't – like a mouse in a field a mile away. But that's won't be the case in heaven because our senses will be dramatically enhanced. I believe that our eyes, for instance, will have telescopic and microscopic capabilities. They will, like all of our body parts, be far more powerful than they are now.

And finally, fifth, verse 44 teaches that our resurrection body is spiritual. Our earthly body is natural, which means suited to an earthly life. But our resurrection body will be spiritual, which means suited to a heavenly life. That means, according to verses 45-49, that it won't be like the unfallen body of Adam. It will be like something far greater, the resurrection body of Jesus and thus, fully suited to life in heaven.

Where We Will Be

That's *what* will be in heaven. Now let's consider *where* we will be. Revelation 21:1 tells us. John writes about heaven in chapters 21-22 and begins in 21:1 with these words, "**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.**" The Greek word translated new there doesn't refer to recency but quality.

It refers to something that's already in existence, transformed. In this case, that something is the old heaven and earth, the universe as it is now. Heaven will be the present universe, including earth, renewed. Renewed means regenerated or changed so that it's suitable for people with resurrection bodies to live in. What has passed away then is not the present universe but the present universe as it is now. There will be no black holes, for instance, formed by dying stars because there will be no dying stars. Stars, including our sun, will never run out of energy.

Revelation 21:1 explains the vastness of our universe. In their book *The Privileged Planet*, astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez and theologian Jay Richards observe this about our universe. It's vast and seemingly unnecessary for our survival as a species. Most of it, in other words, seems like clutter, with no useful purpose. But it only seems that way. What appears to be clutter and so useless isn't really. It does in fact have a divine and ultimate purpose - to be the eternal home of our incredibly powerful resurrection bodies.

Now, 21:2 indicates that earth may be a spatial focal point in that eternal home. I explained in a sermon last year that earth is a special place in our universe now. It will be in heaven as well. God will, I believe, specially manifest His presence on it, in Jerusalem. Earth as a planet and Jerusalem as a city will have special significance in heaven. They'll be the central location for Christians and angels to gather together - to worship God and to fellowship with each other.

What We Will Do

That brings us to a third critical issue. What will we do in heaven? It's many things, four of which I want to identify and briefly explain.

#1 – We will know God. When I say know I mean relationally and all the activity that goes along with that. Our capacity to know Him will be incredibly increased. We will thus engage Him and be engaged by Him in profound ways. That's the thrust of 22:4. Theologian Sam Storm explains it well: **“We will constantly be more amazed with God, more**

in love with God, and thus ever more relishing his presence and our relationship with Him. Our experience of God will never reach its consummation. We will never fully arrive. Our experience of God will never be stale. It will deepen and develop, intensify and amplify, unfold and increase, broaden and balloon.” The single most satisfying activity in our heavenly life will be knowing God!

#2 – We will know what 21:3 calls “His people,” other Christians. Again, when I say know, I mean relationally and all the activity that goes along with that. Our capacity to know people will also be incredibly increased. We can’t currently know or care for any person, including our spouse, in the core of his or her being. But we can and will in heaven. So, I will come to know Moses, Francis of Assisi, George Fox, and you far more fully and deeply than I know my wife now. Think of that. I will know you in heaven far more fully and deeply than I know my wife now.

#3 – We will discover and learn. We’ll have prodigious minds in heaven with IQ’s that are off all earthly charts. And with those minds, we’ll discover and learn about God, angels, each other, and heaven itself. 21:5 tells us that God will continually make things new in heaven, which means our discovery and learning will never end. The great Puritan preacher Jonathon Edwards said it this way: **“The saints will be progressive in knowledge of all eternity. The number of ideas of the saints shall increase to eternity. In heaven there is eternal progress with new beauties always being discovered.”** He’s absolutely right. Stimulating discovery and fresh learning will be a vital, joyful, and never-ending part of our heavenly life.

And finally #4 – we will reign with Jesus. That’s the word that 22:5 and other verses use, “reign.” Jesus will, through the Holy Spirit, give us two things in heaven. The first is powers, abilities to act on the material world around us. His miracles are a sampling of those powers. We will be able to create matter from nothing, change molecular structures, control weather patterns, and much more. The second thing Jesus will give us is an authority. He will assign us our own part of heaven, a solar

system or even galaxy, and set us loose to do with it whatever we choose. Those two things help us understand what it means to reign. It means to use our powers, in conjunction with Jesus and even other Christians if we desire, to do with our assignment whatever we choose. We will be absorbed in a remarkable, joyous, and creative team effort to shape, over and over again and forever, the very nature of heaven itself.

Those then are four of our many activities in heaven. Celebrated science fiction writer Isaac Asimov once wrote that he'd choose the tortures of hell over the boredom of heaven. Many others think the same thing but it's only because they don't understand it. Those four activities make it crystal clear. We'll never get bored in heaven. Each moment in fact will be utterly exciting, just as the one before it was.

What We Should Do Now

The Bible reveals much more about heaven than I've discussed today. But that's enough to show us what we should do, two things.

First, we should learn as many facts as we can about it. Doing that is a two-step process.

The first step is to learn all the facts that the Bible reveals about it. The Bible is our only direct source for knowing about it. So, we go to it first of all and what it says specifically about it. We can do that in various ways. #1 – Compile a list of verses and facts about heaven from our everyday Bible reading. #2 – Look up the word "heaven" in a topical Bible, Bible dictionary, Bible handbook, or concordance. #3 – Read good books about heaven like Randy Alcorn's, titled *Heaven*. And #4 – Read a study I've written titled *Life after Life*. However, we do it, let's do it! Learn all the facts that the Bible reveals about heaven.

The second step is to infer as many facts as we can from those facts. We take the facts that we've learned from the Bible and infer other facts from them. We thoughtfully ask and answer the question, "**If this Biblical fact is so, what must also be so?**" We can learn a great deal about heaven by doing that. Take the fact that Luke 24:41-43

reveals. The resurrected Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish. We can logically infer from that fact that we too will eat in heaven. Or take the fact that Revelation 21:1 reveals. The universe is our heavenly home. We can logically infer from that fact that our resurrection bodies will be able to travel at warp like speed, cover vast distances in moments.

Those two steps then are how we do the first thing we should do – learn as many facts as we can about heaven.

The second thing we should do is determine what those facts mean to us now. We do that by thoughtfully asking and answering the question, **“Does this fact about heaven have any logical implications to my person and life now and if so, what are they?”**

Let me demonstrate. Fact - my resurrection body is the continuation of my earthly body. Implication – aging and decline are nothing to worry and whine about. My left knee isn't what it used to be. But it also isn't what it's going to be, my resurrection knee. Fact – I will reign in heaven. Implication – I always have a future. A 60 year-old bankrupt Christian declared to me years ago, **“I'm a 'has-been.”** To which I replied, **“No, you're a 'will-be' because you're going to reign.”** Fact – I will know my mother far more fully and deeply than I know my wife now. Implication – her death only interrupted, not terminated, my relationship with her.

You get the idea. Many of the facts that we learn about heaven have profound implications to us now. And we need to determine what they are. We'll be strengthened, inspired, and motivated if we do.

Conclusion

I close this morning with a challenge. An attorney once told me that Christians are so heavenly minded that they're of no earthly good. But he was wrong. The truth is that the more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly good we are. So be heavenly minded. Learn as many facts as you can about heaven. Then determine what those facts mean to you now. Your life and everyone's around you will be far better if you do!