**What Is Heaven Like?**

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| **Slide** | **Title** |
| 1 | What Is Heaven Like?  Luke 20:27-38 |
| 2 | Intro—Obscure hypothesis – Wade to his mother –   * How many angels can stand on the head of a pin? How absurd! * Can God create a rock so heavy that God couldn’t lift it? How absurd! * What if you died – where would we go? To daddy * What if you and daddy died, who would we live with? Uncle Tommy and Aunt Kathy?? Big Tom and Mama B?   Son, that’s very unlikely, now that’s enough!  What if Elvis was really alive and he came back to our house and gave me an autograph picture and what if he wanted me to sing a song with him and what if he asked me to tour with him, could I Daddy? Please, could I?  Transition – Absurd!! |
| 3 | This is how the text struck me – how preposterous! The granddaddy of all “what if” stories. And as I studied, the commentators agreed. The Sadducees had no interest in knowing whose wife this woman would be in the resurrection – Not about marriage! In fact, the question is made more absurd by the fact that they didn’t even believe in the resurrection. And this was a running, heated debate between the Pharisees and the Sadducees – The Pharisees believing in the resurrection.  The Sadducee was trying to manipulate Jesus into siding with them. They supposed that if he assumed a resurrection then it’d be impossible to sort out the proper married relationship this woman would have in heaven. Therefore, they believed Jesus would have to concede that there was no resurrection – and “Bingo,” Jesus would be compromised, and the Pharisee’s would be put down. Political victory at Jesus’ expense. |
| 4 | So how does Jesus respond – to avoid the pettiness and absurdity of the argument and the trap ?  He responds first to the question and not the attitude behind the question. That’s the opposite of how he usually responds to religious leaders’ questions and traps. Here are 2 illustrations of how Jesus addressed the attitude behind the scribes and Pharisee's question  1 In Luke 20:1-8 the religious leaders question Jesus' authority for this teachings and miracles. Jesus realized that tehy were not really interested in his authority. They were just interested in trying to trap by getting him to say something blasphemous! In this story the religious leaders ask by what authority does he do his miracles and teachings? Sensing the trap, Jesus turns the question around on them. I will answer if you answer this question for me. Tell me by what authority did John the Baptist baptize and teach? The leaders said to themselves, If we say God' authority, then Jesus will ask why didn't you believe? If we say, Human authority the people will stone us! So they told Jesus they did not know! Jesus said then he would not answer them! – God is his authority! and Jesus avoided a trap of making public claims that could be twisted and made into charges of blasphemy!  2. Example if Jesus addressing the attitude behind the question of paying taxes – Trick to see if he would honor the foreign government or the Lord. Jesus responded to the trick by responding to the attitude of the religious leaders – Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.  If religious leaders had been sincere, he’d helped them sort through the problems of being ruled by a foreign power and still being true to God. |
| 5 | In these examples Jesus addressed the religious leaders attitude behind the questions.  But in this story, he begins with the questions; the question of “what will life be like in the resurrection?” –  In the text after the absurd question about whose wife the woman be in heaven?, Jesus develves into the question.  Why? It’s a very real question, then, as well as today – “What is the life after this life like?” |
| 6 | When Wade went through the litany of ‘what ifs’ about where he’d stay if those around him died – while on the one hand it was preposterous, on the other hand it pointed to a deep need he had for knowing he would always be okay – never abandoned.  In much the same way, in the wake of a loved one’s death, we are confronted with this same question – “What’s life like on the other side?” At the funeral we proclaim that loved one is now at one with Christ in the place prepared for him. He’s now with his family and those others who have gone before. We believe some day we’ll join them. But what will it be like? Will we know each other in the same way as now?  I like to think that Wade is in heaven being one of God’s greeters! He had an extroverted personality! Will Wade be in the Heavenly choir? He had a great voice! Do people grow old in heaven? Will he recognize me when I get to go? Will I know him? Is there such things in heaven as basketball, drama and theater? If so, I’m sure Wade will be involved in those things!  Is that world anything like ours?  On the one hand, the whole issue is absurd – no answers – but on the other hand – very real concerns. |
| 7 | Bonnie Brechbill story:  *After our 2-year old son Jamie died, I was comforted by the thought he was well cared for in heaven. But I worried that he had forgotten the mommy and daddy who loved him. Since there’s no sadness in heaven, I reasoned, he can’t miss us.*  *Finally, I asked my husband, Dwaine, “Do you think Jamie just forgot us? Or does he wonder why we’re not there along with him?”*  *Dwaine was thoughtful. “Remember when we used to leave him with his grandma for a few hours? He’d kiss us goodbye, then run to the toy shelf. When we returned, he’d run toward us with outstretched arms, happy to see us again.”*  *I nodded, remembering our sturdy boy flinging himself at me.*  *Dwaine continued, “But Grandma said he never cried while we were gone. He knew we always came back for him.”*  *My husband put his arm around me. “Well, I think that’s how it is now. Don’t you imagine God surpasses even Grandma at keeping little boys happy and secure?”*  I wonder what the resurrection will be like. Or, will I even care about these earthly relationships in a place where my relationship with God will be full and complete? |
| 8 | These are all valid questions, especially for persons reeling in the aftermath of the death of a loved one.  So, what’s Jesus’ answer to this pastoral concern?  He goes to the sacred books of the Sadducees – Torah – first 5 books of the Old Testament, where Moses is at the burning bush. From this story, Jesus concludes that God obviously is the God of the living and Abraham, Jacob and Isaac are not dead, even though they died an earthly death. They are resurrected.  There is a resurrection! But be sure the things of this life – its rules, its standards, its relationships, its priorities are not the same as in the new age.  It’s like comparing apples to oranges. They are too different. But they are still fruit together.  But not to worry! God is the God of the Living! God will resurrect those made worthy in Christ. God will handle all the details!  Be assured that those in Christ will be a part of the resurrection |
| 9 | In WWII, the German’s fire-bombed London and Bristol relentlessly. Several of our friends in Bristol lived through those nights.  They tell of the first night the bombs struck – on a Sunday evening – most people were in church when the fire rained down from the sky. People were forced to stay at church until past 10 p.m. A bomb meant for a munition’s depot, hit a church and several were killed. This was the beginning of many such nights. As time passed, it became the norm that when an air raid siren went off, any homes and bomb shelters were open to those caught on the street. It was a terrible, scary experience to be caught in the raid.  It was said that a father and son were caught just after dark when a raid struck. Bombs again lit up the city and the fires raged. Frantic, father and son found a crater left by a previous bomb. It was pitch black dark, but the father jumped in and turned to call for his boy – “But I can’t see you!” his son said, “I’m scared!” Seeing the silhouette of the boy against the red burning sky, the father said, “Jump son, I’m here. I can see you. I’ll catch you. It’s okay!”  Finally, he jumped into the safety of his father’s arms.  That’s the way it is in the age of resurrection. Death – dark and mysterious to us. We can’t see from this world into the next. |
| 10 | But we have a sure promise. God is a God of the living. God will take care of it – every detail. We don’t have to fear what’s on the other side of this life. We can enter the darkness of death with confidence that God is waiting with open arms. We don’t have to worry about our loved ones who have died in Christ. They are cared for and someday we’ll understand; when we have died and live again with Christ. |
| 11 | Conclusion:  When John Todd, a 19th century clergyman was 6 years old, both his parents died. A kind-hearted aunt raised him until he left home to study for the ministry. Later, his aunt became seriously ill and in distress wrote him a letter. Would death mean the end of everything or could she hope for something beyond? He sat down and wrote his reply.  *“It is now 35 years since I, as a boy of six, was left quite alone in this world. You sent me word you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I have never forgotten the day I made the long journey to your house. I can still recall the disappointment when, instead of coming for me yourself, you sent your servant, Caesar, to fetch me. I remember my tears and anxiety as, perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar, I road off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and I became lonely and afraid. “Do you think she’ll go to bed before we get there?” I asked Caesar.*  *“Oh no!,” he said. “She’ll stay up for you. When we get out of these woods, you’ll see her candle shinning in the window.”*  *Presently we did ride out in the open and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close around me – a tired and bewildered boy. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper, you took me to my new room, heard me say my prayers and then sat beside me until I fell asleep.*  *Someday soon God will send for you, to take you to a new home. Don’t fear the summons, the strange journey, or the messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting, and you will be safe in God’s care.*  *Your son, John*  We certainly don’t know what the resurrected life is like – but we know that God has taken care of it and that we can relax and trust. For God’s a God of the living – in this world and in the world to come!  Amen. |