## Heaven and Hell - Part 6



By Joseph F. Dumond August 22, 2009

## The glory of HaMashiach

What is the glory of Christ like? During His physical ministry on earth, He gave three of His disciples a preview of His appearance in this glorified spiritual state. "He was transfigured...His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). Years later, at the writing of the book of Revelation, John saw a vision of the resurrected, glorified Christ. Notice how John describes His awesome appearance: "His hair was as white as snowwhite wool, and his eyes flamed like fire; his feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of a mighty torrent...His face shone like the sun in full strength" (Revelation 1:14-16, REB).

This language describes Jesus Christ, the glorified Son of God, as a being of awe-inspiring brilliance. We, too, will share that dazzling appearance!

After His resurrection Jesus had the ability to take on the appearance He had when He existed in the flesh. Early on the morning after He rose from the garden tomb, Mary Magdalene visited His grave. When she saw the tomb was empty, she began to weep (John 20:11). Then "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away!" (verse 15). So Jesus appeared to Mary as a normal human being rather than in His radiant state. She at first mistook Him for the gardener.

On another occasion Jesus appeared from nowhere inside a closed room where His disciples were meeting: "And after eight days His disciples were again inside...Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!'" (John 20:26). After His resurrection Jesus was able to pass through solid barriers—such as the walls of a building or the stone enclosure of His tomb.

Like Jesus, when we are changed to spirit we will not be limited by the laws that govern physical things. With the ability to simply materialize as Jesus did, we will not be subject to restrictions on physical objects. As part of this change we will no longer need to eat to survive, but apparently will have the option of eating for pleasure and fellowship if we choose. In two of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances He shared a meal with His disciples (Luke 24:28-30; John 21:9-15).

Those to whom God gives eternal life in the resurrection will forever possess these supernatural characteristics. Notice the description of the resurrection in the book of Daniel: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to

shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3, NIV).

To better understand just what all this means, be sure to send for or download our free booklet What Is Your Destiny?

What will we do as spirit beings?

As spirit beings in God's family, we will live and work at the highest possible level and environment. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). We will spend eternity with God in His environment—the world of spirit and unimaginable power. We will not sit idle in our new life. We will be positively occupied. Jesus said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17).

When Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, those in the first resurrection will serve as judges (Revelation 20:4) and priests (verse 6) and will "reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). We will not go to heaven to live passively and idly.

Jesus will return to a world that has largely destroyed itself by living in opposition to the commands of its Creator. He will teach people to obey God's laws. He will begin a massive reeducation process to help people unlearn their old ways of doing things and for the first time learn to do things God's way.

Notice Isaiah's prophecy of this future rule of Jesus as Messiah and King over the earth, wherein "mountains" and "hills" are symbolic of larger and smaller kingdoms or political states respectively:

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

At that time Christ will teach all people who have not known God's way. He will be assisted in this by all who are changed into glorified children of God in the resurrection at His return (see Luke 20:36).

If we enter that new life we will be endowed with great power and unlimited energy. As immortal members of God's family we will be like "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, [who] neither faints nor is weary" (Isaiah 40:28).

## A change for the better

Describing the event that will change our mortal bodies, Paul writes: "The sun has a splendour of its own, the moon another splendour, and the stars yet another; and one star differs from another in brightness. So it is with the resurrection of the dead: what is sown as a perishable thing is raised imperishable. Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:41-44, REB).

God will give us bodies that will never tire nor grow ill—and minds having the kind of supernatural abilities He has. Reigning with Christ (Revelation 2:26; 3:21), we will help bring about worldwide peace. We will assist in spreading the knowledge of God to the most distant lands in His globe-spanning program of reeducation. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," He tells us, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Those changed at Christ's return will include all His faithful followers at His return as well as the dead who were called, had repented and who lived in faithful obedience to God. It will include all of the faithful listed in Hebrews 11, who "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13).

Those who died in faith include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (verses 17-21). The promise they have not yet received is the promise of the Kingdom of God. As Jesus says, "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). Remember that the Kingdom of Heaven is synonymous with the Kingdom of God, which Christ will establish on earth at His return.

## Responding to God's invitation

You can be among those who arise from all parts of the world in the resurrection to be with Christ in His Kingdom—if you respond to God's invitation. God is issuing that call through the preaching of the gospel. This very booklet you are reading is part of that effort. The calling of God is not offered to everyone in this age. Jesus told His disciples that the understanding of God's truth is not yet available to many: "It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matthew 13:11). The Bible speaks in several places about God's "elect" or chosen people. They are called to understand these things now, in this present age, but the rest—the vast majority—will not be called until later.

Most of the people of Israel, God's nation spoken of extensively in the Old Testament, were not called to understand the Kingdom of God during their lifetimes. Their hearts were hardened, their minds blinded. But the opportunity for most of them will come in the second

resurrection. "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7).

Yet as Paul explains in this same chapter, the time is coming when "all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob [i.e., Israel]" (verse 26). God's calling is carried out according to His timetable. When all is said and done, His plan is entirely fair to everyone.

Peter explains that those who now become a part of His Church are chosen in this age to receive salvation in the first resurrection. Peter says of them, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The good news is that God eventually will offer eternal life to everyone who repents. He desires that everyone enter His Kingdom. He wants to share this opportunity for eternal life with all (2 Peter 3:9).

In a final, breathtaking view of what God has in store for those who serve Him, the apostle John was inspired to write this glimpse of the future in Revelation, the last book of the Bible: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away...He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:4, 7).

The future God has planned for us is fantastic beyond belief! It is far superior to the fanciful heaven of men's imagination. God will share the real future with all who repent and turn from their sins. As for those who willfully refuse to repent, they will not suffer forever in hell. They will simply cease to be. But this need not happen to you.

You may share in the eternal Kingdom of God if you heed the words Jesus spoke when He began His ministry: "The time has come...The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15, NIV).

Take comfort in the truth of God. There is no need to fear death if you turn your life toward Him. After all, He wants you to live with Him in abundant joy forever and ever. And He'll make that happen—if you let Him!

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. Bottom Line. May Yahweh bless you and show you His truths as you begin to keep His commandments.

Shabbat Shalom
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