

## SMOKING OR NON-SMOKING: PART IV

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For the past three weeks, we have been talking about where you go when you die—either to Heaven or to Hell. And, for the most part, I have been describing the physical features of those two mutually exclusive destinations. But, this morning, I'd like to bring it down to a little more personal level. And to do this, I want you to think about an important question that affects you directly. Ask yourself this: "Once I get to the one destination or the other—what is it exactly that I will be doing? Well, we've already covered what's going to happen if you end up in Hell. We haven't been calling it the **"smoking"** section for nothing. You won't do anything much except smoke, quite literally, because those in Hell will have nothing to do but feel its fires in all their various dreadful forms. But, hey—Hell is not where you want to be. You want to go to Heaven! So, let's ask the more pertinent question: What will you be doing, for all eternity, in Heaven?

David Lloyd George, the post-WWI Prime Minister of Great Britain once said: "When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of Hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would be no escape."<sup>1</sup> The thing is, many people have similar misgivings about going to Heaven. The teacher and Christian writer, Sean McDowell (the son of Josh McDowell), is a professor at Biola University and also serves as a part-time high school teacher. He recently commented on this distorted view that so many seem to have of Heaven. He wrote: ***"Sadly, [an erroneous] view of the afterlife is common even among Christians. Our vision of Heaven is often limited to [seeing it as] an extended, boring, uninspiring church service. Many see it as a place where we will mosey about among clouds in long white gowns while strumming on harps. Somehow our image of Heaven has become grotesquely distorted, and the prospect of life after death has not captured our imaginations or transformed our lives."*** Then he goes on to say, ***"I recently asked my [high school] students what they would do if they had only three days left to live before they died and went to heaven. How would they spend those few remaining days? Answers included skydiving, traveling, surfing, and [some other less than wholesome things that I won't mention]. I followed up with a simple question [and asked them]: 'So, you think there may be pleasures and experiences in this life that if you don't do them before you die, you will miss out on altogether because they won't exist in Heaven?' All but two students answered yes. The prospect of Heaven dismayed and disappointed them."***<sup>2</sup>

I agree with Sean McDowell—that is, indeed, very sad, because the Bible doesn't teach that. Heaven will not dismay. It will not disappoint. And, it will be anything but boring! But, do you see the

problem here, even among some Christians? They don't want to die and go to Hell because they do have a pretty good understanding that Hell will be such an awful, tormenting place. And yet, they don't want to go to Heaven either. Their thoughts about what awaits them in Heaven are unappealing to them as well. And part of the fault lies with their failure to open the Bible and see what it tells them about the things we'll be doing in Heaven during our eternal stay there. And what it tells us is that you can't afford to miss out on the things of Heaven. When people live their lives in fear of both Heaven and Hell—and many actually do—they **do miss out**. They miss out on life. And they miss out on life because they lack any understanding as to the true purpose of life. Living within the blinders of their limited perspective, they feel trapped between Heaven and Hell. And so, they live solely for the things of this world. Those worldly "**treasures**" that we talked about last week—those things that thieves come in and steal away, just as Satan comes in to destroy you and take you away as his treasure.

But Jesus tells us that there is an alternative—you are not trapped here on earth just to tread water between Heaven and Hell until you die. Jesus said: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that [you] may have life, and that [you] may have it more abundantly." John 10:10 (NKJV) Jesus is not only speaking of life in this world, but life with Him and His Father in Heaven as well. Those lost souls who cling to this earth, fearing both Heaven and Hell—they fail to understand many things. Erroneously believing Heaven to be a boring place is one of their most serious mistakes. By ignoring God's Word, they fail to see something very important. They fail to understand that the Bible describes Heaven in such a way that we can begin to get a glimpse of just how wonderful, just how all-encompassing, God's plan really is. God's plan for us **is to give us life**. And the purpose of that life is to come to know God and to abide with Him forever. That, in a nutshell, is your purpose.

And what we need to realize is that the life that we will have in Heaven will be the most exciting, fulfilling life that you could ever imagine. In fact, it will be so good that it's beyond your imagination, for as Paul tells us: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9 I must admit that as a young man, I didn't know what Paul might be talking about when he wrote that. My view of Heaven was quite flawed and, **oh so limited**. You see, from the time that I was a boy, I have always loved to spring gobbler hunt. If you had asked me 30 years ago what I thought would be the "**perfect heaven**", I might have said that Heaven must be like a continuous turkey hunt with huge 25 pound gobblers strutting around, all having 12-inch beards, and ready to be hunted with my favorite slate caller. But, I didn't have a clue about what God's Word really teaches about Heaven. If I did, I would have realized that whatever it is that gives you the greatest joy in

this world, the delights of Heaven will outshine it by a billion times. So, let's move on and explore what the Bible tells us that we will be doing in Heaven. How will we spend our time? What activities will we engage in?

Well, one thing is for sure, if we look to the Bible, it doesn't tell us that we'll be "**floating around on a cloud, playing a harp.**" However, that is not to say that Heaven doesn't offer us some well needed relaxation. Now I don't know about you, but sometimes in this life, I get really tired. So, after I leave this life on earth, and before I get too engaged in all of the activities in Heaven, it would be nice to have a little breather—just a little time to catch my breath, so to speak. And, hey—that's not a problem because we are promised that Heaven will be a **place of rest**. In the Book of Revelation, it assures us: "Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:13 (NLT2) The Book of Hebrews confirms this as well and says: <sup>9</sup> "So there is a **special rest** still waiting for the people of God." <sup>10</sup> For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. <sup>11</sup> So let us do our best to enter that rest." Hebrews 4:9-11 (NLT2) There is something to take note of in these verses. They refer to a "**special rest.**" It reminds us that God rested on the seventh day after completing His Creation—it was His **special rest**. It gives us a clue that the things promised to us in Heaven are the very things that we should be observing here on earth. For God has commanded, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8 (ESV) You need rest here, in this place, on this day—each and every week. That is the rest you need in this world. What kind of rest will you receive in Heaven? In Heaven, it will be a restoring, rejuvenating, joyous rest—like something you have never experienced before! But, bear in mind that we are certainly **not talking about sleep!** There won't be any sleep because you won't need to sleep. After all, the Scriptures tell us that there won't even be any night in Heaven—so it is not geared to earthly sleep as we know it.<sup>3</sup> No sleep, but plenty of well welcomed rest awaits you in Heaven.

Now, someone might complain: "Man, if it's going to be lying around all the time, just resting for all of eternity—that, in and of itself, **would be boring!**" But, there won't only be rest in the physical sense—it's even more **rest in the spiritual sense**. Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (NLT2) Jesus begins to give you a taste of that kind of rest in this world—and He completes the process spiritually in the next life. But, believe me—you won't just be laying around all of the time! Why?—because one of the main activities in Heaven is **the worship of God**. And during those times of worship, rest will be the farthest thing from your mind.

There, before the throne worshipping God, you will experience incredible joy. The more you worship Him the greater and more intense your joy will be. And you won't be worshipping alone. You'll be there in the presence of all the angels and heavenly beings in a mighty chorus of praise and worship. The Apostle John describes this in his vision of Heaven: "All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. Revelation 7:11 (NIV) "They held harps given them by God<sup>3</sup> and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.'" Revelation 15:2-3 (NIV) And what an awesome sound that will be! It is almost beyond description by mere human words. John, though, gives it his best shot when he says: "Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.'" Revelation 19:6 (NASB) And you know what one of the most incredible things will be? The fact that guys like me, who can't sing a lick on this earth, will be among that heavenly choir singing with voices like angels; guys like me will be making heavenly sounds on an instrument so difficult to play as a harp!

But let me be clear, it won't only be rest and then worship in Heaven—there will be **work** as well. Work in the sense of **"serving God."** In fact, Revelation 7:15 tells us that when we are in Heaven, we will **serve** God day and night.<sup>4</sup> "What?"—someone might ask—"What do you mean work in Heaven? I'm working myself to death here on earth. You said there'd be rest, **not work** in Heaven." Well here's the news flash for anyone who says that: God does not like laziness—His Word states that again and again.<sup>5</sup> He doesn't like anyone just standing around here on earth; and there won't be any loafers in Heaven either. But take note of this—**"Work,"** as we know it here on earth, is quite different from what **"work"** will be like in Heaven. From the very beginning, it has always been God's plan for all human beings to work. The Book of Genesis tells us: "The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to **WORK** it and watch over it." Genesis 2:15 (HCSB) But, before Adam sinned, his work there in the Garden of Eden was nothing but pure joy—no drudgery, no sweat—just joy. That is what God always meant work to be like. It wasn't until Adam failed to follow God's command and allowed sin to flood into this world that the joy was drained from work. In response to that sin, God declared: "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." Genesis 3:17 (NIV) And, with that curse, work here on earth became pure drudgery. But, in Heaven there is no such curse,<sup>6</sup> and because of that our **work in serving God** will be effortless, pleasing and joyful.

Now, the fact that we will be **serving God**, and thus **working for Him**, raises a very interesting possibility regarding one plausible aspect of our work. The Greek word for **"serve"** is *latreuō*, from the

Greek root word “*latris*,” meaning something like a “***hired hand***.”<sup>7</sup> When I was a boy, I always dreamed of how great it would be to be a hired hand on *Bonanza* or on the *High Chaparral*. Can you imagine how unbelievably great it will be to a ***hired hand of God***. So what would a ***hired hand of God*** do? We wouldn’t be ***gunslingers*** like on those TV westerns—We’d be “***Gospel-Slingers***”! Now let me explain what a ***Gospel-Slinger*** might be doing in the service of God.

You see, the Bible hints that God has ways that we’ll be serving Him that might involve missions to worlds unknown. The funny thing is that modern science seems to suggest this very possibility that there are “***worlds unknown***”—even parallel “***universes unknown***.” Well, they are ***unknown*** to us, but not to God, because He created them just as He created everything else. Now, why do I say that the Bible hints to this possibility? In modern physics, there is something called “***string theory***.” String theory is a theoretical framework dealing with quantum gravity. It posits that there is more to reality than the three dimensions that we can perceive as human beings. The three dimensions that we can relate to are ***height, width and depth***. But, string theory allows for the possibility of as many as ***11 different dimensions***<sup>8</sup>—a concept that blows my mind. The interesting thing is that string theory could support the existence of multiple universes in which our universe may be but one of many parallel universes that all exist at the same time—we just can see them.<sup>9</sup> And you know what else is amazing? If there are multiple universes, God created them all because John’s word assures us: “All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made” John 1:3 (ESV)—including all the universes that may exist.

Now, this isn’t as far-fetched as it may sound. In fact, God may have actually given us instances in the Bible where he has allowed some humans to temporarily peek into parallel universes. For example, take the case of Elisha, who asked God to open the eyes of this servant, Gehazi, in order that he could see into what was otherwise an invisible realm. “Elisha prayed, ‘O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” 2 Kings 6:17 (NIV) Or, in the New Testament, Stephen, just before he died, was given the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to see into what from our perspective is an invisible realm. The Book of Acts describes how he was allowed to momentarily gaze into Heaven while still here on earth.<sup>10</sup> Could it be that the Bible is trying to tell us something about the mysterious properties of God’s amazing Creation that scientists are only now catching up to?

With all of this in mind, consider a rather curious verse from the Book of Revelation that says: “The leaves of the tree [of life] are for healing the nations.” Revelation 22:2 (HCSB) Since the Scriptures tell us that there will be no more pain and suffering in Heaven<sup>11</sup>, it appears reasonable to assume that there

will be no need for any healing there. And, of course, after the Final Judgment, there won't be any "*nations*" in need of healing in this world. So what "*nations*" would those "*healing leaves*" be applied to then? Surely, they will continue to heal and not go to waste. Could these "*healing leaves*" be intended to "*heal the nations*" in some *other world*—or perhaps even in *another universe—one like our own*—that may be in need of God's healing Word as well? And so, the question follows: Could we be sent, as angels are sent to us in today's world, to bring healing to these unknown worlds through the truth of God's Word. Will we be those *hired hands* of God—those "*Gospel-Slingers*"—sent to "*heal*" them with the love of Christ? Speculation? Maybe.

And, I might sound crazy to even suggest something like that, but if I am crazy—then I am not alone. Dr. Robert Jeffress, senior pastor at First Baptist in Dallas, senses similar possibilities when it comes to the things that God may send us to do in serving Him once we get to Heaven. He tells us: "[Before the Fall, Adam and Eve] worked and worshipped at the same time. And the same thing will be true for us in Heaven. We will do more than sing hymns and pray all day. God has responsibilities for us. In Matthew 25, Jesus told the parable of the talents, which teaches us that based on our faithfulness in this life, we will receive responsibilities in the next life. Some will rule over planets, some will rule over stars, and some will rule over galaxies. Paul said one day we will [even] judge angels. (1 Corinthians 6:3<sup>12</sup>). God will give us responsibilities to carry out in eternity, and we will find [amazing] fulfillment in doing that."<sup>13</sup>

So, is Dr. Jeffress right about this? Well, I think that he may be on to something. We'll have to wait to see. These things, for the time being, remain a mystery. But, they won't always be a mystery. And this is exactly why the Apostle Paul says: "*For now* we see through a glass, darkly; *but then* [i.e., once we enter into the presence of God in Heaven, then we will see] *face to face*: now I know in part; *but then shall I know even as also I am known.*" 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV) The point is that God has so many things stored up in Heaven for us to do in serving Him—Wonderful *work* that will be just amazing to perform for Him—things beyond our wildest imaginations.

Again, these things that we will be doing in Heaven, they are actually reflections of the things that we should be doing on this earth, in the here and now, in this life: Worshipping and serving God being the primary part of our efforts. And yet many fill their lives with something other than God. Whether they will admit it or not, those trapped between Heaven and Hell (and fearing both), are actually living lives with a constant inward terror. It is a terror that seeks to fill that vacuum in their souls. Blaise Pascal, the 17<sup>th</sup> century mathematician and philosopher, is famously quoted as having said: "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every person which cannot be

filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator.” In choosing what will fill our souls, we fill our eternal destinations as well. And so, we are the ones who punch our tickets to Heaven or Hell by accepting or rejecting Jesus Christ. Is the decision in choosing Christ a difficult one? Yes—it certainly is. Is the Christian life difficult to follow in this world? Yes, it is—there’s no question about that. But, G. K. Chesterton gives us good insight when he said: “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.” Some people find following Christ too difficult because they just can’t bear up to the pressures of this world. But, you are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with you. The Holy Spirit empowers anyone who will call upon the name of the Lord<sup>14</sup>—and sincerely mean it—to overcome this world and all of its alluring treasures. Jesus overcame the world.<sup>15</sup> He demands that you do nothing less.

And so, the question always remains the same: Smoking or Non-smoking? Which dimension will you spend your eternity in?

Let us pray.

Forest Hill Baptist Church  
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Darvin Satterwhite, Pastor  
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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, Tyndale: Carol Stream, Ill. (2004), p.65

<sup>2</sup> Sean McDowell, *Preachingtoday.com*, search key: Heaven.

<sup>3</sup> “Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. Revelation 21:25 (NLT2) “And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.” Revelation 22:5 (NLT2)

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 7:15 (ESV) “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and *serve* him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.”

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 10:5 (NIV) He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. Proverbs 15:19 (NIV) <sup>19</sup> The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 22:3 (NLT2) No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.

<sup>7</sup> James Strong, *Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "3000".

<sup>8</sup> Michael G. Strauss, “Dictionary of Christianity and Science,” Zondervan:Grand Rapids (2017), 647.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dummies.com/education/science/physics/string-theory-parallel-universes>.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7:55-56 (NIV) <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." See: Randy Alcorn, “Is the Present Heaven Part of Our Universe?” March 29, 2010. <https://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Mar/29/>.

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 21:4 (NKJV) 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."

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:3 (NRSV) Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters?

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Robert Jeffress, First Baptist Dallas. "What will We Do in Heaven?" December, 8, 2017, <http://www.firstdallas.org/icampus/blog>.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 10:13 (NIV) Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

<sup>15</sup> John 16:33 (NIV) [Jesus said:] "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."