

Foundations of Faith (A Catechism for Today)

Lesson 37 – September 10

Question 98: What will heaven be like?

Heaven is pictured in the Bible in different ways: an eternal kingdom, the Father's house, a house with many rooms, a marriage feast, an unending day and the joy of God's presence. Our deepest delights here on earth are only a dim reflection of the fullness of life that awaits us.

Jn 14:2-3 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Mt 8:11 "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven ..."

1 Cor 2:9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him".

2 Kings 2:1-18 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!" So they went down together to Bethel. 3 The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?" "Of course I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it." 4 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Jericho." But Elisha replied again, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together to Jericho. 5 Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?" "Of course I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it." 6 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to the Jordan River." But again Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together. 7 Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. 8 Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground! 9 When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away." And Elisha replied, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor." 10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't." 11 As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!" And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress. 13 Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River. 14 He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and cried out, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across. 15 When the group of prophets from Jericho saw from a distance what happened, they exclaimed, "Elijah's spirit rests upon Elisha!" And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. 16 "Sir," they said, "just say the word and fifty of our strongest men will search the wilderness for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has left him on some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha said, "don't send them." 17 But they kept urging him until they shamed him into agreeing, and he finally

said, "All right, send them." So fifty men searched for three days but did not find Elijah. 18 Elisha was still at Jericho when they returned. "Didn't I tell you not to go?" he asked.

Isa 26:19 But those who die in the LORD will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For your life-giving light will fall like dew on your people in the place of the dead!

Dan 7:14 He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

Mt 6:20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.

2 Cor 5:1 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.

Ph 3:20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

Rev 4:1,2

1 Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this." 2 And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it.

Question 99: Is there a hell?

Just as the Bible gives many images of union with God, it gives a number of images of separation from God. Among these are Hades, Sheol and Gehenna. While heaven describes life in the presence of God, these describe the life which rejects God and therefore stands under God's fearful judgment. Hell is not primarily a place. It is a state of separation from God. Yet the Bible declares that even in Sheol we cannot escape God and that Christ proclaimed his redemptive work in the realm of the dead.

Mk 9:43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.

Mt 25:41-42 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.'

Ps 139:7-8 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol you are there.

1 Pet 3:16-20 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirit in prison, who in former times did not obey.

Ps 16:10 For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.

Mt 10:28, 23:33

28 “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

33 Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?

Acts 2:27 For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

Rom 10:7 And don’t say, “Who will go down to the place of the dead?” (to bring Christ back to life again).”

Eph 4:9-10 Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. 10 And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

Rev 1:17-18, 20:11-15

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.

11 And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. 14 Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. 15 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.