

# All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Trinity 21 Sunday Sermon on 2017-11-05

## The Two Destinies of Man by Fr Reed Merino

The society around us offers a variety of speculations about what happens to us at the end of our lives. Take your pick: You can just die, rot and become nothing if you are a committed atheist. You can enter the company of those like Aunt Edna, and just float around from séance to séance, speaking of the dimension where EVERYONE who dies is undergoing a program of perpetual improvement. Some religions offer the cycle of perpetual reincarnations, until you finally break out of the cycle altogether. Others teach you that after death you will hover around for some indeterminate time (or forever) in the area where you died.

But from the Bible studies we have already engaged in, it is clear that God's revelation tells us that two and ONLY two destinies await the human race: "heaven and hell". This week I want to speak about "heaven;" next week we will discuss the "other" place.

Regarding "heaven," the assumption of many, if not most, is that we die and go to heaven forever (assuming we do not go to the "other place"!).

For example, Jesus told us in Mt 5:

**Verse 20** "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. So they conclude that Jesus was saying our hopeful destiny is IN heaven. But the "Kingdom OF heaven" means the Kingdom FROM heaven, or "the kingdom that now exists in heaven, the dimension of God and His angels."

I remember as a young man thinking about "heaven." It actually seemed rather boring, or at least unreal.

But this "heaven" idea is not at all what is taught in God's revelation. In the Scriptures, "heaven" is the dimension in which God and His angels currently exist. Human beings are, spirit INCARNATED, created for PHYSICAL a dimension, not a dimension appropriate for angels. Think, for example of the following:

From Revelation 20:

**Verse 4** "... I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads

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or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

**Verse 5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

This passage occurs at the beginning of the return of Jesus to THIS planet. "Resurrection" means bodily restoration (lit. "standing again"). Jesus returns HERE, and those who are His are bodily restored HERE. Then comes the thousand years of perfecting THIS dimension, cleansing it from all of its sin corruptions and restoring it to its original condition of being "very good."

Even nature shares in this cleansing and restoration:

From Romans 8:

**Verse 19** "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

**Verse 20** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

**Verse 21** because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Why would the creation need such a deliverance, if our destiny is in heaven?

From 2 Peter 2:

**Verse 10** "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

**Verse 13** But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new EARTH, in which righteousness dwells."

Again, if the final condition for God's children is heaven, why would a "new earth" be necessary?

Finally, the Apostle John, reveals the ultimate destination for the created order: for better OR worse, the ultimate dimension is PHYSICAL!:

From Revelation 21:

**Verse 1** Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

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**Verse 2** Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

**Verse 3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

**Verse 4** "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."

**Verse 5** Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." ...

**Verse 9** Then one of the seven angels ... carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

**Verse 11** having the glory of God.

**Verse 22** But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

**Verse 23** The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

**Verse 24** And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

**Verse 25** Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ...

And from Revelation 22:

**Verse 3** "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

**Verse 4** They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

**Verse 5** There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

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What the revelation given to John actually shows is that God intends to MERGE our dimension with His, after Jesus is finished restoring and glorifying this dimension.

This understanding provides us marvelous challenge for our imaginations: Paul tells us that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

The previous passages provide the CONTEXT in which our imaginations are to "run wild." What can YOU imagine?

I can imagine no need for planes, trains and automobiles:

From Isaiah 40:

**Verse 31** "They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint".

I can imagine playing with cobras and TRex's:

From Isaiah 11:

**Verse 6** "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them."

From Isaiah 65:

**Verse 25** "'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.'

I can imagine learning without any destroying: I can imagine looking at a puppy and being able to see it's circulatory system, or skeleton. I can imagine looking into a tree to count the rings!

God's true children are going to be judging even angels:

From 1 Corinthians 6:

**Verse 2** "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"

**Verse 3** Do you not know that we shall judge angels?"

Therefore, I can imagine being elevated into my God's ability to look into the depth of other's hearts, to be able to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

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THAT kind of "heaven" is anything BUT boring, no? THAT is what it will be like to be saturated by the glory of God in a resurrected human body. Can you imagine that? Do you actually BELIEVE it?

Isn't that kind of future worth preparing for it?

The Christianity created by Jesus is the ONLY way that leads to the glory I have been describing. But that glory requires from you a consecration and dedication of a very specific kind. (not the same as "you have to become very religious...")

From Luke 14:

**Verse 25** 'Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,

**Verse 26** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

**Verse 27** "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

**Verse 28** "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it

**Verse 29** "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,

**Verse 30** "saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?'

**Verse 31** "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

**Verse 32** "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

**Verse 33** "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

If your teen-age child expected to become a brain surgeon by just studying on his or her own, how seriously would you take them? Why? Because you know how much consecration is required to become a brain surgeon. Well Jesus made it VERY clear what kind of consecration is required from you, didn't he. You all know what consecration and dedication are: that is what

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you had in order to learn your professions, how to learn to be a responsible parent or spouse.

In Jesus, the designer and engineer of ALL that exists (in its original form) has come to the earth. Whether you recognize him or not, that is who He is. He deserves and requires a surrender from you that is deeper and more absolute than ANY other relationship (spouse, parent, children, nation). Example: You feel at death's door: can't breathe well, no energy, etc. You are diagnosed with a mysterious and fatal heart condition for which there is no known cure. An eminent heart surgeon says you need to let him take out your old heart and replace it, and promises that you will be playing tennis after he does it. He also requires you to relocate to his surgery: in New Guinea! Your parents, spouse, children and friends all say "don't do it." Who do you listen to? That is the kind of choice you have to make to become what JESUS was describing and demanding in the Gospels.

That consecration to Jesus takes quite specific forms: believing and building upon each and every teaching of Jesus (e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5); thinking of those teachings before you make a decision, spend your money or open your mouth; reading and meditating seriously and regularly upon the Scriptures.

Will you make that choice?