

Book Study – Matthew 17:14 – 18:9

Healing of Demonic Boy – The Temple Tax – The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven



Before We Begin Our Journey...

1. How does it feel to have a problem you seemingly can't solve?
2. How would you go about reforming the tax laws in this country?
3. What do you miss most about being a little kid? What is your favorite childhood memory?



Do Some Digging and Pre-planning...

4. How did the man describe his child's situation and why was he not healed? (17:15-16)
5. What reply did Jesus give when the man said Jesus' disciples had been unable to help? (17:17)
6. What is the "condensed version" of what happened here? Why is this important to us today? (17:18-21)
7. What sober subject did Jesus again bring up when the disciples came together in Galilee? (17:22-23)
8. How did Peter respond to the tax collectors' questions? (17:25)
9. What did Jesus say about paying taxes? Why did Jesus agree to pay the temple tax? (17:26-27)
10. What question did the disciples ask Jesus? What did Christ do to illustrate His answer? (18:1-2)
11. What quality makes for true greatness? (18:4)
12. What radical figures of speech did Christ use to show the severity of sin? How? (18:8-9)



Sort, Organize, Gain Understanding...

13. Why do you think Jesus was upset by His disciples' lack of faith?
14. In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to believe and trust in God?
15. Why should we pay taxes? How do non-Christians react when Christians act as if they don't have to comply with worldly laws?
16. What are the pros and cons of churches being exempt from taxes?
17. What is it about children that Christ wants us to emulate?
18. What prevents us from being more childlike in our faith?

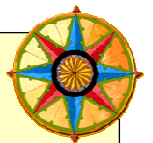


Application for the Journey...

19. What "impossible" task can you assault with your faith this week?
20. What changes do you need to make the next time you do your taxes to make sure you pay all that you owe?
21. What can you do today to humble yourself?

A prayer for your journey... "Lord Jesus, as I walk through this coming week, help me prepare for my journey by reading my Bible more regularly, seeking help as I need it from my Christian friends and focusing on the needs of others instead of myself. Help me to demonstrate my faith by stepping into the unknown, untried, and untested areas of my life." -Amen

Direction Finder...



Children were important to Jesus. He uses them to give us images for life and heaven...



1. Heaven

— (1.) Definitions. The phrase "heaven and earth" is used to indicate the whole universe (Gen 1:1; Jer 23:24; Acts 17:24). According to the Jewish notion there were three heavens,

(a) The firmament, as "fowls of the heaven" (Gen 2:19; 7:3,23; Ps 8:8, etc.), "the eagles of heaven" (Lam 4:19), etc.

(b) The starry heavens (Deut 17:3; Jer 8:2; Matt 24:29).

(c) "The heaven of heavens," or "the third heaven" (Deut 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 115:16; 148:4; 2 Cor 12:2).

(2.) Meaning of words in the original,

(a) The usual Hebrew word for "heavens" is *shamayim*, a plural form meaning "heights," "elevations" (Gen 1:1; 2:1).

(b) The Hebrew word *marom* is also used (Ps 68:18; 93:4; 102:19, etc.) as equivalent to *shamayim*, "high places," "heights."

(c) Heb. *galgal*, literally a "wheel," is rendered "heaven" in Ps 77:18 (R.V., "whirlwind").

(d) Heb. *shahak*, rendered "sky" (Deut 33:26; Job 37:18; Ps 18:11), plural "clouds" (Job 35:5; 36:28; Ps 68:34, marg. "heavens"), means probably the firmament.

(e) Heb. *rakia* is closely connected with (d), and is rendered "firmamentum" in the Vulgate, whence our "firmament" (Gen 1:6; Deut 33:26, etc.), regarded as a solid expanse.

(3.) Metaphorical meaning of term. Isa 14:13,14; "doors of heaven" (Ps 78:23); heaven "shut" (1 Kings 8:35); "opened" (Ezek 1:1). (See 1 Chron 21:16.)

(4.) Spiritual meaning. The place of the everlasting blessedness of the righteous; the abode of departed spirits.

(a) Christ calls it his "Father's house" (John 14:2).

(b) It is called "paradise" (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7).

(c) "The heavenly Jerusalem" (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12).

(d) The "kingdom of heaven" (Matt 25:1; James 2:5).

(e) The "eternal kingdom" (2 Peter 1:11).

(f) The "eternal inheritance" (1 Peter 1:4; Heb 9:15).

(g) The "better country" (Heb 11:14,16).

(h) The blessed are said to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and to be "in Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22; Matt 8:11); to "reign with Christ" (2 Tim 2:12); and to enjoy "rest" (Heb 4:10,11).

In heaven the blessedness of the righteous consists in the possession of "life everlasting," "an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17), an exemption from all sufferings for ever, a deliverance from all evils (2 Cor 5:1,2) and from the society of the wicked (2 Tim 4:18), bliss without termination, the "fulness of joy" for ever (Luke 20:36; 2 Cor 4:16,18; 1 Peter 1:4; 5:10; 1 John 3:2). The believer's heaven is not only a state of everlasting blessedness, but also a "place", a place "prepared" for them (John 14:2).

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2. Heaven The rendering of several Heb. and Gk. words:

a. Material. (1) *The sky* (Heb. *shamayim*, "lofty"), by far the most frequent designation of *heaven* in the Heb. Scriptures, and meaning the firmament, which appears like an arch spread out above the earth, and represented as supported on foundations and pillars (2 Sam 22:8; Job 26:11), with the rain descending through its gates or windows (Ps 78:23; cf. Gen 28:17). We find such expressions as "toward the heavens," "reaching to heaven" (Gen 15:5; 28:12); "under heaven," i.e., on earth (Ecc 1:13; 2:3); "under the heavens," i.e., the whole earth (Gen 7:19; Deut 2:25; Job 28:24; etc.); "the heavens and the earth," i.e., the universe (Gen 1:1; 2:1). Akin to this word is *height* (Heb. *marom*, "elevation"), which, though not rendered "heaven," has doubtless a

celestial signification (Ps 68:18; 93:4; 102:19), rendered "on high," "height." (2) *A wind* (Heb. *galgal*, "a wheel"), rendered "heaven" in Ps 77:18 (KJV), but meaning a *whirlwind* (as in NASB and NIV). (3) *Clouds* (Heb. *shahag*, "cloudy dust, vapor"), the *skies* or heavens; serene (Job 37:18) or covered with clouds (37:16); from which descend the rain and dew (36:28; 3:20), and manna (Ps 78:23; cf. Isa 45:8), and whence the thunder is heard (Ps 77:17-18). Closely connected with (3) is (4) *Celestial expanse* (Heb. *raqiaʿ*, "that which is spread out"), i.e., *firmament* (which see). (5) Of the Greek terms, *ouranos* signifies the *heights* and therefore the vaulted expanse of the sky; the region where clouds and tempests gather (Matt 16:2-3; Luke 4:25); also heaven, the region above the sky, the seat of things eternal and perfect where God and the other heavenly beings dwell (Matt 5:34; 23:22; etc.). Paul (2 Cor 12:2) seems to designate this heaven the third heaven.

b. Spiritual. Scripture evidently specifies three heavens, since "the third heaven" is revealed to exist (2 Cor 12:2), and it is logical that a third heaven cannot exist without a first and second. Scripture does not describe specifically the first and second heaven. The first, however, apparently refers to the atmospheric heavens of the birds (Hos 2:18, "sky") and of clouds (Dan 7:13). The second heaven may be the stellar spaces (cf. Gen 1:14-18). It is the abode of all supernatural angelic beings. The third heaven is the abode of the Triune God. Its location is unrevealed. It is the divine plan at present to populate the third heaven. It is a place (John 14:1-3). It is called "glory" (Heb 2:10); those who enter it will be perfected forever (10:14) and made partakers of Christ's fullness (John 1:16), which is all fullness (Col 1:19) and which comprehends the very nature of the Godhead bodily (2:9). The apostle John was called into heaven (Rev 4:1). The apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-9). He was prohibited, however, from revealing what he saw and heard. Heaven is a place of beauty (Rev 21:1-22:7), of life (1 Tim 4:8), service (Rev 22:3), worship (19:1-3), and glory (2 Cor 4:17-18).

c. The Heavenly City. In Rev 21:9-22:7 the apostle John describes the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city. Prophetic students have given this various interpretations. Seiss, Scott, Kelly, Darby, and Jennings maintain it describes the Millennium. Ottman, Larkin, Govett, and others hold that it describes the eternal state. J. Dwight Pentecost (*Things to Come*, 1958, p. 572) correctly proposes that it describes *the eternal habitation of the resurrected saints during the Millennium*.

The city is a *literal city*. From Heb 12:23 we learn that the inhabitants of the city (besides its being the abode of the Triune God) consist of: (1) The bride, the Lamb's wife, the church, referred to as "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven." (2) The redeemed saints of the OT. These are referred to as "the spirits of righteous men made perfect." (3) "Myriads of angels," i.e., unfallen angels. Our Lord referred to this city in John 14:2-3 when He said He would go away and would come again and that He was preparing "a place" for His disciples.

Entrance to the city will be by translation (glorification) or resurrection, both in the case of the church saints and the saved OT saints. As J. Dwight Pentecost correctly says, "Thus all the redeemed of the ages who enter this city may do so by resurrection. The city thus becomes the abode of all the resurrected saints who enter it at the time of their resurrection" (*Things to Come*, p. 577).

With regard to the relation of this heavenly eternal city to the earth, it may be said that the resurrected saints of all ages in that city will be in their eternal state and possessed of eternal blessings, although this will not be true of things on the millennial earth. Concerning *the relationship of this heavenly city to eternity*, it may be said that at the end of the Millennium, after the earth has been renovated by fire, this dwelling place is removed. Afterwards, however, it will find its place and will be the connecting link between the new heaven and the new earth in the eternal state.

The description of the heavenly city by the apocalyptic seer (John) is lavishly magnificent. It is said to possess "the glory of God" (Rev 21:11), with a "brilliance . . . like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper" (v. 11). Its twelve gates, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of sons of Israel, indicate Israel's portion in the city; that is, the redeemed of Israel. The twelve foundations of the city's wall will have in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (v. 14). The city is called "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (v. 9). This shows its connection with the church, the bride, being called "wife" here because the symbolism of marriage is viewed as consummated, indicating that Christ is joined gloriously with His redeemed people of this age from Pentecost to the translation.

The foundations of the walls of the city are described as garnished with all manner of precious stones such as jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, etc. The twelve gates are set each one so that they consist of one huge pearl. The seer's city is said to be pure gold. No temple is there because the Triune God is unveiled in all of His glory. No light is needed because the unobscured glory of God is revealed in the city...

BIBLIOGRAPHY: E. M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place-A City-A Home* (1921); W. M. Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven* (1968); N. Turner, *Christian Words* (1982), pp. 202-5.

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“We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said,
I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good...”

-- Numbers 10:29

Question: (for John McArthur, Jr.)

The Bible teaches that as a Christian, when we die we receive different degrees of rewards in heaven. And, I'd like to know if you could expound on those different degrees, but also, if there are different degrees of suffering in Hell?

Answer: (this question has come up several times in our Bible study group)

I think "yes" to both of those questions. There will be varying degrees of reward in heaven. That shouldn't surprise us: there are varying degrees of giftedness even here on earth. To get a good glimpse of what heaven might be like, look at the church. From the moment of your redemption, the Lord put His Holy Spirit within you, and according to I Corinthians 12, He gave you certain spiritual gifts, right? He gave gifts to all of His church. They differ. What are gifts? They are varying capacities for ministry, varying capacities for service to God in His church. And I think the same thing will be true eternally; I think in eternity, we will all be given according to our abilities and according to our faithfulness--varying capacities for glorifying, serving, and worshipping God.

So, I think that it's going to be based upon two things. One would be the sovereignty of God, who will choose to give as He wills, as in I Corinthians 12, as He gives spiritual gifts in this life to the church, in whatever way He chooses to do that--that's a sovereign thing. And secondly, I think there is another component, and that has to do with faithfulness here. I believe our eternal reward will be in some way determined by the level of faithfulness we have had here.

Now, there are a number of reasons why we assume this. **One of them was this conversation that Jesus had with the mother of James and John, who said, "My boys want to sit on your right and left hand when you come into the kingdom," and He said, "It's not for Me to give that; it's for my Father to give that." And there He said, there are going to be some people elevated. Somebody's going to be on my right, somebody's going to be on my left, and some others are going to be down the line here-- It's not for Me to decide that; It's the Father. But, then He went on to say the criteria by which that is going to be decided is faithfulness unto death.** So, I think the greatest reward in the future is awarded for the most faithful people, and that probably plays itself out in those who were faithful unto death: the martyrs, those who gave their life. You could give your life in living, as well as give your life in dying, couldn't you? And you know what I mean by that. You could make the self-sacrifice to the maximum extent even while you're alive, where you sacrifice everything else and be what Paul called a "living sacrifice."

So, I think there is definitely going to be, in heaven, varying levels of service, just as there are with the angels: there are archangels, and there are cherubim and seraphim, and principalities and powers and rulers, and all of those varying levels of angelic hierarchy. I think in eternity, we are all going to be sorted out within that eternal worshipping community and given varying capacities and varying responsibilities, which are determined by the sovereignty of God and our faithfulness here. That's why John says, "Look to yourselves that you lose not the things you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward." It is possible that you could be faithful, and the Lord be ready and prepared to give you a full reward, but by some sin in your life towards the end of your life, you could begin to forfeit and those things would be taken back off the list, added to the "wood, hay, and stubble" kind of thing, and your reward would be less.

What is it? Is it going to be some people with bigger crowns? No. We're not going to be going around saying, "Hah! I got a big one; you got a little one!" It's not going to be that. Whatever we get, I believe in the picture of the 24 elders, we take our crowns and cast them at the feet of the Lord. But, I don't believe they're going to be anything that's visible. I think it's going to be a capacity for serving God fully and completely. I don't think you'll have any sense of loss or any sense of missing anything, because each individual's capacity will be reached to its maximum. But, I think what we want to do is have the greatest capacity for worshipping God, as His sovereignty would give us and as our faithfulness would warrant.

Now, in terms of the other, there will be degrees of suffering. **Hebrews 10 says, "How much greater suffering will come to the one, who has trodden underfoot, the blood of the covenant, and counted it an unholy thing, done despite to the Spirit of grace." To put it simply, it means this: the more people know about the gospel and reject, the greater degree of suffering they will experience--**when they trample underfoot the blood of the covenant. That is to say, the pagan who never heard anything about the gospel of Jesus Christ will not suffer the degree that the apostate would, who heard it all, understood it all, and blatantly rejected it all.

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