

Will You Go To Heaven?

LESSON 7

"The Promised Land"

While addressing Gentile-born converts in Galatia, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "Now to ABRAHAM and his seed were the promises made. ... And if be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the PROMISE" (Gal. 3:16, 29).

The Christian is now only an "heir." What Christians shall inherit, if they shall spend eternity—is a definite, specific PROMISE of God. And that promise was made to Abraham, who is called in this same book Of Galatians (written to Gentile converts) the "father" of the faithful (Gal. 3:7).

If one is converted, regardless of race, color, nationality or sex; IF one is "Christ's" a Christian—then he is one of Abraham's children, spiritually speaking, and an "heir" of the PROMISE made to Abraham. What he is to inherit, then, is whatever was promised to Abraham!

Let's see if it was heaven.

1. Precisely what did God promise Abraham? Gen. 12:2-3, 5-7; Ps.105:11.

COMMENT. "Seed" means offspring. So the promise to Abraham and his offspring—his descendants was the LAND OF CANAAN!

2. Abraham went to Egypt for a short time (Gen. 12:10. When he returned to Canaan, did God repeat His promise to Abraham and his offspring? Gen. 13:14-15. What are the boundaries of this land? Gen. 15:18.

COMMENT: The land of Canaan, much of which is occupied by the of Israel today, was promised to Abraham and his descendants. That's why it's called "the Promised Land!" Notice that it is a region on this earth, not up in heaven!

3. How long did God promise Abraham that he and his seed would possess the land? Gen. 13:15.

COMMENT: Since the inheritance is to be an ETERNAL inheritance, it must also include EVERLASTING LIFE! More about this later.

4. Was this promise expanded until it ultimately included inheritance of the WHOLE EARTH? Rom. 4:13.

COMMENT: Not one word about heaven! Through Abraham, all true Christians, as his spiritual descendants, are promised the earth!

5. Was the same promise God made to Abraham also made to his son, Isaac? Gen. 26:1-5.

6. And was the same promise made to Jacob, Isaac's son? Gen. 35:9-12. And to Jacob's chil

dren—the Israelites? Verse 12; Rom. 9:4.

COMMENT: Jacob, whose name God changed to "Israel," had twelve sons. Each son gave rise to one of the twelve tribes of Israel, known collectively as the "children of Israel," or Israelites.

Obedience BEFORE Inheritance

1. In making this promise to Abraham, God conditioned it on obedience. What did God tell Abraham to do? Gen. 12:1.

2. Did Abraham resist, quibble and argue with God about leaving his homeland? Or did he just DO what he was commanded? Gen. 12:4; Heb. 11:8. Into what land did God lead Abraham? Gen. 12:5.

COMMENT: God called Abram (as his name was then) out of Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his birth. That land was under the sway of the political/religious system that began at Babel, a type of the spiritual "Babylon" in which we live today!

And today, God calls us out of this present evil world—this modern Babylon! (Rev. 18:1-4.)

Abraham obeyed! First, he left his native land, his friends and relatives, his old way of life—he forsook ALL and followed where God led. But God did not stop here in testing Abraham's willingness to obey Him.

3. How did God further test Abraham? Gen. 22:1-2.

COMMENT: The proper translation of the word tempt here is "try." God tempts no man to sin (James 1:13). When the King James translation of the Bible was made in 1611, the word "tempt" meant to try, or to test. That is why the translators used the word "tempt" in Genesis 22:1.

4. Did Abraham, in facing this test, stop to reason it out, make excuse, or rebel? Or did he faithfully OBEY God—even rising early in the morning to obey His command? Gen. 22:3.

5. Did God allow Abraham to kill his only son? Verses 10-12.

COMMENT: God did not really want Isaac's life—He merely wanted to see if Abraham was WILLING to obey Him in faith—no matter what the cost! Note in verse 12 the words: "now I know that thou fearest God." Because Abraham was faithfully obedient to God (Heb. 11:17), the Bible refers to him as the "father" of all who live by faith (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:7).

6. After Abraham obeyed—had been put to the severest test and found absolutely faithful—were there any other conditions to God's promise? Gen. 22: 15-18.

COMMENT: Note the words, "because thou HAST DONE this thing," in verse 16; and the words, "because thou hast OBEYED MY VOICE," in verse 18. The promise was now unconditional!

7. What other scripture shows us that this promise is ABSOLUTELY SURE? Gen. 26:5.

All Can Become Heirs to the promises

Let's notice how people of all nations are eligible to eventually become heirs to the same promises made to righteous Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob.

1. Did God promise Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through his "seed?" Gen. 12:3; 22:18. Who is this "seed?" Gal. 3:8, 16.

COMMENT: The word "seed" in Genesis 22:18 refers specifically to one Seed—Christ—rather than to multiple "seed" or offspring mentioned in Genesis 13:16; 17:18.

2. Does Luke prove that Jesus was a direct descendant, a "seed of Abraham?" Did He clearly spring from the tribe of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob or Israel? Verses 33-34. Also notice John 4:22 and Hebrews 7:14.

COMMENT: Luke records Jesus' genealogy through His mother Mary. Joseph, mentioned in Luke 3:23, was actually the son-in-law of Heli, the father of Mary. And so Luke shows that Mary was directly descended from Abraham (verse 34).

3. How does one who is not a descendant of Abraham by birth become an "heir" to the promises made to him? Gal. 3:27-29.

COMMENT: All people who have not descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob (Israel) are called "Gentiles" in the Bible. Paul showed the Gentile-born Galatians that the only way they could become heirs to the promises made to Abraham was by becoming children ("seed") of Abraham through CHRIST!

4. What did Paul say the Ephesian Christians were before their conversion? Eph. 2:11-12.

COMMENT: As Gentiles, they had been "strangers from the covenants of promise, having NO HOPE, and without God in the world."

5. But through Christ and His sacrifice were they brought near to the promises? Eph. 2:13. And were they strangers and foreigners anymore? Verse 19, Were they then a part of the spiritual house-hold of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: And so today individuals whom God calls, regardless of ethnic background, may become "heirs" of the promises God made to Abraham by becoming his "seed" through Christ'

We read in Galatians 3:7 "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." If you are a Spirit-begotten Christian, regardless of race or nationality, Abraham is your "father" in the faith, and you will inherit whatever God promised to him. HOW clear!

And so all true Christians are heirs along with Abraham and will inherit, 1) ETERNAL LIFE and 2) THE WHOLE EARTH. "Heaven" was NOT included in the promises God made to Abraham!

But when will Abraham and his "children" receive, their inheritance? When will they receive the promises?

Promises YET to Be Fulfilled

1. Has Abraham yet received the inheritance God promised to him? Acts 7:2-5. Notice verse 5.

COMMENT: These inspired words plainly state that Abraham has not yet received the promised inheritance—even though God's promises were made unconditional because of his obedience.

22. Were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob merely sojourners—that is, temporary inhabitants, visitors—in the land God had promised to them? Heb. 11:8-9, 13. Had they, at the time the book of Hebrews was written, received the promises? Verses 13, 39-40. Was Abraham still dead during the time of Christ and the apostles? John 8:52-53.

COMMENT: These inspired scriptures of God plainly state that all these men of God died in faith NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISES!

3. Did David, an heir of Abraham and one of God's prophets, inherit the promises or is he still dead in his grave? Acts 2:29.

COMMENT: We read in the New Testament that Abraham and all the patriarchs have NOT YET received the promised inheritance! They, and all who have become Abraham's children through Christ, Christians, are now only HEIRS to the promises, They have not yet become Inheritors!

The BIG question that still remains is: When will they receive the promised inheritance?

To Inherit the "Kingdom of God"

In order to understand when the promises will be inherited, let's study more fully what Abraham and his heirs are to inherit.

1. What message did Jesus Christ proclaim during His ministry on earth? Mark 1:14; Matt 9:35.

COMMENT: Christ preached the Gospel—the "good news" of the coming KINGDOM OF God which is to occupy and govern the earth—the same earth that has been promised to Abraham and his heirs for an eternal inheritance. Is there any connection? Absolutely! Notice further:

2. Will all the righteous men of old be "in" the Kingdom of God? Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28.

COMMENT: The promises God made to the fathers include entrance into the Kingdom of God! And so their inheritance will include 1) ETERNAL LIFE in 2) the KINGDOM OF GOD) and 3) possession of the earth on which that Kingdom will reign—the very same inheritance Christians may receive through Christ!

3. What did Jesus say Christians should strive to enter? Matt. 6:33; 7:21.

COMMENT: Notice in Matthew 7:21 that it is the Kingdom "of" heaven—not in heaven! It is Kingdom of, or owned and ruled by, heaven in the same sense that the Bank of Morgan was not in Mr. Morgan—but was owned and managed by him.

Matthew uses the term "kingdom of heaven" to express exactly the same idea that Mark, Luke and John express as "kingdom of God." But the expression "kingdom of heaven" does not mean kingdom in heaven, any more than it means a kingdom in God! But it does mean a kingdom owned and ruled by God whose throne and dwelling place is in heaven.

4. What did Jesus say the "meek" shall inherit? Matt. 5:5. But what did He say of the "poor in spirit"? Verse 3.

COMMENT: Is this a contradiction? Of course not! The "meek" and the "poor in spirit," in other words, humble Christians—shall inherit the EARTH for an everlasting possession, and shall enter the "kingdom of heaven," which will be on earth! As we learned in a previous lesson, the Kingdom of God, which Christ will establish on earth at His return is the divine Family Of God which Will rule by the government of God!

To enter into—or "inherit"—the divine Kingdom of God is a destiny of such marvelous glory that the human mind cannot really grasp it! We mortals have no concept of what is really in store for those who obey God.

As we read in I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The full extent of the inheritance God has promised true Christians cannot be even remotely imagined by the natural mind of man—but God does reveal it to us "by his Spirit" (verse 10). Precisely what God reveals will be covered in the next lesson!

5. What does Matthew 6:10 also tell us about God's Kingdom?

COMMENT: Christians today are to pray earnestly: "THY KINGDOM COME!" The word "come" implies it will come to earth. Christ did not tell us to pray, "Let us GO to heaven!" Obviously God's Kingdom has NOT come to the earth yet.

6. Where is the Christian's inheritance being kept? 1 Peter 1:3-4; Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:23.

COMMENT: These verses do say, "Great is your reward when you get to heaven." They do not tell us when or where Christians will receive their inheritance and rewards—only that they are now being "reserved" for them in heaven!

7. When will the righteous inherit the Kingdom of God? Matt. 25:31-34.

COMMENT: Clearly it is when Christ returns that Abraham and his children through Christ will become inheritors of the promises! But notice what else will happen at Christ's coming:

Importance of the Resurrection

1. Can anyone inherit the divine Kingdom of God while still a mortal flesh and blood human being? 1 Cor. 15:50.

2. What did Paul say must happen to our mortal bodies in order to inherit—to actually become a part of—that spiritual Kingdom? Verses 51, 53. When will our bodies be changed converted from flesh to spirit? Verse 52. Does that trumpet sound at the SECOND COMING of Christ? 1 Thes. 4:16-17. Is this when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and others will inherit the promises? Same verses. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus about this change? John 3:6, 8. And if we are "born of the spirit," can we

finally see—enter—the divine, spiritual Kingdom of God? Verse 3.

COMMENT: At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ all the dead in Christ will be raised with new SPIRIT BODIES. Those Christians still alive at His return will be instantly changed into the same kind of bodies which will then be in Kingdom or Family of God. Our present. flesh is corruptible, subject to death and decay. But spirit beings are ETERNALLY NEW—immortal, incorruptible, never subject to death or decay!

3. Did Jesus declare that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will—in the future—be resurrected? Matt. 22:31.

COMMENT: This text is often twisted and perverted in an attempt to prove that Abraham is not dead—that he went to heaven when he died—just the diametric OPPOSITE of what Jesus used this illustration to point out.

God is the God of the living, not the dead. God sometimes speaks of those things which are to be as though they have already happened (Rom. 4:17). Jesus was speaking of their future resurrection to immortal life! For He plainly said, in context, "As touching the RESURRECTION of the dead...."

We can now see why Abraham and his children through Christ have not, as yet, inherited the promises. They simply cannot come into their ETERNAL, INHERITANCE until they receive ETERNAL LIFE! This, as Paul explained, will happen at the resurrection from the dead!

Without a resurrection, the dead would never live again (I Cor. 15:16, 18). Therefore, the resurrection of the dead is central to God's plan. And unless Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all deceased Christians are RESURRECTED from the dead at Christ's coming, they cannot inherit the promises!

How different the plain truth of God's Word is from the ancient, religious fables and myths which the world embraces today!

How Christ Made Eternal Inheritance Possible

Jesus Christ came to "confirm" the promises made to the fathers (Rom. 15:8) To confirm means to support or establish the certainty or validity of; to make valid or binding by a formal or legal act.

Let's notice how Christ made it possible for all mankind to inherit those glorious promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

1. What is sin? T John 3:4. Will anyone who sins—transgresses God's law—inherit the Kingdom of God? Eph. 5:5; 1 Cor. 6:9-10. What is the penalty—the wages—of sin? Rom. 6:23. Have all people sinned? Rom. 3:23.

COMMENT: God is Creator of the entire universe. He is also the great Lawgiver. Whoever is not obedient to His law commits sin. And the penalty of sin is ETERNAL DEATH! Since all have sinned, all have come under the same penalty. If each one of us were to pay the penalty our own sins, none could receive eternal life—none could inherit the promises made to the fathers.

2. Did Christ give His sinless life as a sacrifice FOR US so we wouldn't have to pay the penalty of our sins and thus be deprived of eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God? 1 Tim. 2:5-6: Rom. 5:8-10. Was His sacrifice voluntary—given of His own free will? John 10:17-18.

COMMENT: God, the Father, created all things by Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2; John 1:1-3). Jesus was GOD incarnate God made flesh (John 1:14). Therefore, as God and our Maker, Jesus' physical life was of GREATER VALUE than the total of all humans who have ever lived! So by dying, Jesus was able to pay the penalty of death for ALL the sins of ALL mankind! Christ "confirmed" the promises God made to Abraham by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and then by dying for our sins. His death for our sins and subsequent resurrection make it possible for us to receive eternal life! (John 3:16; Rom, 5:10.)

3. But, what, conditions must we fulfill before Christ's sacrifice can be applied to pay the penalty our sins have incurred? Acts 2:38. What must we become? Gal. 3:29, first five words: Rom. 8:9.

COMMENT: Whether we are direct descendants of Abraham or Gentiles, we must become "Christ's"—Christians—in order to eventually receive eternal inheritance!

4. Has Jesus become the "Captain" or forerunner—the leader—of our salvation through His suffering, death and subsequent resurrection to glory? Heb. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:22-23. Of what has Jesus been appointed "heir" by the Father? Heb. 1:1-2. And will we, if we become "Christ's"—Christians—and overcome, INHERIT ALL THINGS with Him as co-heirs? Rom. 8:16-17; Rev. 21:7.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, at His resurrection, inherited all the promises made to Abraham! And by living a sinless life prior to death, He made it possible for all who accept His sacrifice to become CO-HEIRS of the same promises with Him.

5. Did Christ leave a will, or testament? Heb. 9:15. (A testament is a Will.) What kind of inheritance will the heirs of this will, or testament, receive? Same verse. When a person makes a will, must he die before it comes into force? Verses 16-17.

COMMENT: Christ left a will, a testament. And through His Word, He teaches what we must do to become co-heirs with Him of the promise of eternal inheritance, the Kingdom of God.

But a testament, or Will, is of no effect until the one making it dies. So Christ. died that we may inherit the promises through Him. But He lives today at the Father's right hand, ready to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25), to help us, and to give us strength so we can overcome sin and inherit the glorious promises of God at the resurrection!

Has Anyone Gone to Heaven?

There is absolutely NO scripture in all the Bible that says Christians go heaven when they die! Yet most people seem to be oblivious to the plain teaching of the Word of God. They have taken for granted, without question, the false idea of "going to heaven." Let's notice a few more scriptures which have been either overlooked or misinterpreted by those who believe this false doctrine.

1. What did Jesus tell His disciples, as recorded in John 13:33, 36?

COMMENT: Some have assumed that Christ taught His disciples they would follow Him into

heaven "afterwards." But that would contradict all the plain scriptures we have already studied.

Jesus' comment in verse 36 was actually a prophecy regarding Peter. Knowing that He was about to be killed, Christ indicated Peter that he, too, would be killed — later. That's how Peter would follow Jesus "afterwards." (Tradition says Peter died by crucifixion.) And Peter still lies dead in his grave. But at Christ's return, he will rise in the resurrection with the rest of the saints and become an immortal member of the Kingdom of God!

2. Does the Bible clearly tell us where the resurrected saints will be and what they will be, doing after Christ returns? Rev. 5:10. What did Christ say He is preparing for them? John 14:2-3.

COMMENT: "Mansions" is an improper translation. The correct rendering is "abodes" or dwelling places." In this case the abodes refer to rooms in the "Father's house" or God's Temple, which were occupied by God's priests. These rooms represent positions of authority and responsibility—positions the saints will be given in God's ruling Kingdom at Christ's return!

These positions will not be in heaven. Christ plainly said He was going to heaven to "prepare" a position of authority for each Christian. It is when He comes to earth again that these positions will be awarded. Notice again Christ's words in verse 3: "I will come (back to earth) again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am (headquartered in the Temple of God on earth) there ye may be also."

When Jesus returns to the earth as "King of Kings," He will tell the saints: "Come ye blessed . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for YOU" (Matt. 25:34). And the scriptures declare that they will rule all nations here on earth, having positions of authority in God's Kingdom!

3. Does the Bible dogmatically state that NO ONE, except Jesus Himself, has ever ascended up into heaven? John 3:13. Could anything be clearer?

COMMENT: Some may point out Revelation as an exception. This verse reads: "And no man in heaven . . . was able to open the book." However, the expression "no man" in the King James Version is an improper translation of the original Greek. The Revised Standard Version, The Revised Authorized Version, Moffatt's translation, the New English Bible, and the New International Version all properly translate the same expression as "no one."

4. But what about the "thief on the cross?" Didn't he go to heaven with Jesus on the very day of His crucifixion? Luke 23:43.

COMMENT: The very plain and simple answer is NO! Let's understand why. In the first place, Christ Himself did not go heaven that day. Instead, he was placed in a tomb—in hell—where He remained dead for three days and three nights. Secondly, notice the context of this verse. Remember the thief had just asked, in verse 42, "Lord, remember me WHEN thou comest into thy kingdom." The plain fact is that Jesus has yet come into His Kingdom, as previous studies have clearly shown.

Thirdly, the word "paradise" does not mean heaven at all. The word actually describes the earth when He will dwell on it. "Paradise" simply means a "garden, pleasure ground; grove, park, "a grand enclosure or preserve . . . shady and well-watered enclosed by walls." That, is the definition you will find in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

And fourthly, in many versions of the Bible, this verse is mis-punctuated. There were no commas in the Greek when the New Testament was written. So when the translators supplied

the commas in the English, they were placed where the translators thought they should be. (In most instances the punctuation is correct, but in this particular case it is not.) Christ did not say, "Today shall thou be with me in paradise," but rather, "I say unto thee today, shalt thou (or you shall) be with me in paradise."

The word "today" stresses the time of His promise—not the time Jesus would be in paradise. Jesus discerned the man's repentant attitude and was able to tell him that he would eventually live again, with Christ, in a beautiful world. That "paradise," however, has not yet come to this earth, and the repentant malefactor is still dead!

5. What will those Who "Wait upon the Lord" inherit? Ps. 37:9. What shall those "blessed of God" inherit? Verse 22. What shall the "righteous" inherit, and how long shall they dwell there? Verse 29. And what does God promise to those who "keep His way"? Verse 34.

COMMENT: Is there anything wrong with having the earth as an eternal inheritance? Would you "settle for" earth? The earth today would be an extremely wonderful place in which to live were it not for rebellion against God and His Spiritual Law that, if kept, would result in pence, happiness and joy!

Happiness and joy are not a matter of geographical location. They are a state of mind! Think of it—there will be NO SIN among the Spirit-born members of the Kingdom or Family of God. No liars, no murderers, no thieves or robbers.

There'll be no strife, no War, no sickness or disease; no poverty, no hunger, no want! What a wonderful inheritance! When we put all the scriptures together, it becomes crystal clear that the destiny of God's saints is not strumming on harps up in heaven for all eternity. It is infinitely more glorious and exciting!

Heaven on Earth!

In a previous lesson we learned what the Millennial rule of Christ on the earth will be like. We found that the whole world will then become a glorious UTOPIAN PARADISE—resplendent as the Garden of Eden!

But what will the earth be like after the Millennium is over and God's great Master Plan for mankind is complete—when all the righteous will have been given glorious, immortal, spirit-composed bodies, and all the incorrigible wicked will have been burned to ashes?

1. Will there be a NEW earth and NEW heavens after the present earth's surface is purified by fire? 2 Peter 3:12-13; Rev. 21:1.

2. Who will dwell on the new earth? Rev. 21:24-27. Will these "nations" be the resurrected, immortal Sons of God—the saved? Verse 24. Are their names written in the book of life? Verse 27.

3. What will be the capital city of the new earth? Rev. 21:2, 10, 14. Will the new Jerusalem be a sparkling, glorious city with streets of real gold? Verses 18, 21. Where will this city come from? Verses 2, 10.

COMMENT: How clear, therefore, that although Christians do not go to heaven when they die or when they are resurrected, the "heavenly Jerusalem" is COMING TO EARTH!

4. Will God the Father then come and dwell on the earth in person and make the new Jerusalem the location of His very THRONE? Rev. 21:3, 22-23; 22:3. Will those who enter this city be able to see God's face? Rev. 22:3-4.

COMMENT: The new Jerusalem—with streets of gold—will descend to this earth and will become God's headquarters for all eternity! The EARTH is destined to become the center of all activity in the universe!

Understanding the great, future plans God has made for the earth, and seeing that the Father Himself will eventually move His headquarters to this earth, why should anyone desire to "go to heaven?"

After studying the Bible carefully as we have with this lesson, the plain truth is that heaven is NOT the "reward of the saved." Christians do NOT go to heaven when they die, or when resurrected.

The surprising truth is that heaven is coming to the earth. The earth will become the very headquarters from which the Father will rule His vast creation!

Will you dwell on that new earth? Will you be a part of that glorious world?

When Jesus Christ returns He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you." (Matt. 25:34). May God help you to be among those who will inherit the Kingdom of God along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!