

Apprehensions of Heaven

I. Introduction:

A. A few lesson back in this series: I questioned whether cats would be in heaven... Some of you took offense at this-- So, I thought I would bring more evidence in my defense→ That there will not be Cats in Heaven... **The Following is an excerpt from both a Dog's & a Cat's Daily Diary:** First the **Dog**...

8am – “Oh boy, **Dog Food** my favorite!”

9am – “Oh boy, a **Car Ride**, my favorite!”

9:40a – “Oh boy, a **Walk**, my favorite!”

10:30a – “Oh boy, a **Car Ride**, my favorite!”

11:30a – “Oh boy, **Dog Food**, my favorite!”

12 noon – “Oh boy, the **Kids**, my favorite!”

1p – “Oh boy, the **Yard**, my favorite!”

4p – “Oh boy, the **Kids**, my favorite!”

5p – “Oh boy, **Dog Food**, my favorite!”

6p – Oh boy, **Playing Ball**, my favorite”

8p – “Oh boy, **Sleeping** in my Master's Bed, my favorite!”

Now, excerpts from a Cat's Diary:

Day 983 of my Captivity: My Captors continue to taunt me with bizarre little Dangling Objects... They dine lavishly on fresh meat→ While I'm forced to eat Dried Cereal... The only thing that keeps me going→ Is my hope of Escape / & the mild satisfaction of ruining the occasional piece of Furniture... **Yesterday, my attempt** to kill my captors (by weaving around their feet while walking) almost succeeded-- Must try this at the top of the stairs... In Attempt to repulse my captors→ I once again induced myself to Vomit on their favorite chair-- Must try this on their bed... **Today I decapitated a mouse** & brought them the headless body→ In Attempt to make them aware of what I'm capable of / & to strike fear in their hearts...However, they merely made

condescending comments→ **About** what a "good little hunter" I am (Hmm, not working according to plan)... **When they gathered with a group of their Accomplices→ I was placed in Solitary:** However, I could hear the noise & smell the food... **But more importantly**, I overheard that my confinement was due to my power to induce Allergies....**Must** learn what this is→ & How to use this to my advantage... **I am convinced that the other Prisoners here are flunkies and snitches:** **The Dog** receives special Privileges: He's regularly released→ & Seems to be more than willing to return-- He's obviously retarded... **The Bird must be an Informant:** I observe him communicate with the guards regularly... I'm certain that he reports my every move... My captors have arranged protective custody for him→ **In** an elevated cell....So he is safe-- For now"... **& So**, Need I say more?

B. Well, you can Speculate on the animals we love: But when it comes to the people we love→ **The Apprehensions** become much more intense... **& So, today, what I would like to do:** Is To Consider the **Often Asked Questions** emerging from our Puzzlement (Concerns / Apprehensions) about heaven... **& I** have devised this to play out this way-- **Questions from Earth / Answers from Heaven** **& While** we're working through this conversation→ **I'm Not** wanting to appear Dogmatic... **But I** do believe that the Scriptures offer us enough insights→ **To be** an Encouragement to us...

II. The 1st Question is this-- Where do Christians go when they die?: Now this one is a bit involved→ **So** allow me a few minutes to explain what I see from Scriptures here...

A. In The OT: The abode of the dead→ Is called **"She'ol"** (Many translations simply use the word "Grave")... Sheol was the place that all of the dead went... Now the Greek term for "sheol" is **"Hades"**... **Now the Hebrews came to understand: That** Sheol/Hades was the Intermediate dwelling place of the dead→ **& It** was made up of **Two Realm--** One realm was called **"Paradise"** (A place of conscious bliss

for the Righteous / Often called “Abraham's bosom”) / **The other realm** was called “**Tartarus**” (a place for the Wicked)... **& Jesus clearly Reinforced this understanding:** **When** He told the story of the **Richman & Lazarus** in **Luke 16**-- **Where** you'll remember that Lazarus died→ **& Went to “Abraham's Bosom” / While** the Richman went to a place of Torment... **You might also remember** how Jesus told the **Thief on the Cross**→ “*Today, you will be with Me in Paradise*”...

B. Now, I've given this a good bit of Thought→ But it's still a work I process: **& That's** (in part) due to the fact that the Scriptures upon which this is framed are difficult to understand→ **& Thus**, the discussion on these particular passages has become somewhat Complex & Controversial... **But I can share with you** how I frame this in my mind→ **From** what I see in Scriptures... **Prior to Jesus' D/B/R/A:** **It doesn't** appear that Paradise & Heaven are the same place... (i.e.) **Jesus** was not in heaven for 3 days between Golgotha & Easter... **You'll remember the encounter Mary had with Jesus in John 20:** **When Mary** attempted to cling on to Jesus after His Resurrection→ (& Jesus told her in **v.17**) “**Do not hold on to me, for I have not YET ascended to the Father**”... **I also see in the context here I Peter 3:19:** **Where** Peter refers to Jesus as having “**preached to the spirits in prison**” after His Resurrection... **Apparently**, the Saints of the OT couldn't go to heaven (& live in God's presence)→ **Until** their sins were atoned for... **B/C** as the letter of Hebrews tells us-- **Before** the Death of Jesus for our sins→ **It** was a time of forbearance of their sins (Not a time of forgiveness)... **Now** (again) they were in a place of eternal bliss→ **But** not yet in the actual presence of God... **I think this is perhaps what Paul is alluding to in enigmatic reference of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8:** (When it says) “**When he ascended on high, he took many captives**”... **You See, at the triumphal moment of the Resurrection:** **Jesus** became the victor over death / **& the “owner” of Hades--** (i.e.) **When** Jesus conquered death→ **He** earned the right to open the door to Sheol... **& When** He did this→ **He** released the righteous Saints who had been waiting there... **& So, we find that AFTER Jesus' Ascension:** **You'll** note that from that point on→ **Paradise & Heaven** are in the same place...

& So (in **II Corinthians 12**) Paul refers to an event in his life: Where (as he says) He was “caught up to the third heaven→ & Heard **inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell**-- & He calls the place “Paradise”... It’s also worth noting: That after Jesus Ascends (from that point on in the NT)→ The Righteous Dead are always referred to as being in heaven...

C. Now, if you have been following me in this series:

(You might be a head of me thinking) “Well, if at the Final Judgment→ God is going to Bring Together (Merge) Heaven with a New (Redeem / & Transformed) Earth-- **Then where is Heaven Now?**... Well Heaven (that will one day make a dramatic move toward Earth) now exists in a spiritual dimension of reality→ **That** God has hidden from us...

Understand, that only God is Eternal & Self-Existent→ All else has been created by Him: Heaven isn’t synonymous with God→ Nor is it essential to His being... **Thus, God must have created heaven:** (i.e.) It’s not a place He MUST dwell→ **But** Rather a place He CHOOSES to dwell... & B/C God created heaven→ It had a beginning-- & Is thus neither Timeless or Changeless... Heaven has a Past / a Present / & a Future... & **Clearly, since we are all awaiting our Glorified Bodies at the Resurrection: The status** of the Present heaven is not the final resting place→ **But Rather** a Refreshing & Temporary halt on a journey that will ultimately take us somewhere else... **& SO, this is what I believe happens when someone we know & loves dies in the Lord:** When such a person dies→ **Their** spirits Immediately go to heaven (as Paul puts it in **Phil.1:23**) “**to be with Christ**”... **Just like Stephen** when he was being stoned to death (in **Acts 7**)-- He saw Jesus standing there in heaven→ (& he prayed) “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*”...

D. Now, some people suggest that since in the Bible

death is referred to as “Sleep”: That when we die→ We’re placed by God in a state of (what some refer to as) “**Soul Sleep**” (i.e. A long period of unconsciousness between the moment we die & the coming Resurrection) ... & So, just like we’re not conscious of Time while we’re asleep

(while in these physical bodies)→ **Our spirits** will be awakened at the 2nd Coming of Jesus-- **& So**, it will seem that the time between our death and the Resurrection was Immediate (i.e. We will sense that no time has passed between the time of our death→ & The time of the Coming Resurrection)... **But when the Bible refers to our having "Fallen Asleep" at our death: I think** it refers to how our Body (the physical part of us) sleeps→ **While** the spirit part of us Relocates to a Conscious existence in heaven... **& The reason I believe this: Is B/C** this idea of "Soul Sleep" fails to Reconcile with those Scriptures→ **That** clearly imply that there is a Waiting time between the death of a Righteous person & the Return of Jesus... (e.g.) In **Revelation 6:9-10** (John observed this)...

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony. They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?"

Notice that it says that John saw the Souls of the Martyrs: & These Martyred saints are not asleep... **& While** their Present state is Secure **& Their** Future victory is Assured→ **They're** clearly Consciously & Eagerly anticipating their full Vindication... **They're** in heaven→ **But** they are waiting for something more... **Now go with me to I Thessalonians 4:14: & Notice** how Paul plays out the moment of the Resurrection→ **& See** if you catch the puzzling reference to our (in essence) being in two places at once

For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have fallen asleep.

You See here how all the Righteous who have died will be coming back with Jesus... **Now** keep reading in **V.15**...

We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven

with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves.

& So, we see that what happens: Is that the spirits that are now in heaven are going to return with Jesus→ **& Our spirits** will then be Re-united with our Glorified Bodies at the Rapture... **& In keeping with the great act of new creation--** This is When the Earth is going to be purged by Fire (The Curse lifted)→ **& We'll** return to what will now be a the New Earth... **& So, when I preach a funeral: I Don't** have any problem acknowledging that a Christian is now in heaven with the Lord... **& So, at our death**, our spirits will immediately go to be with Christ (There will be no layover in Hades)... **& It will be the best day I have ever lived: But** it will not be the best day I WILL EVER live-- That will come when Jesus returns→ **& I** receive my Glorified Body...

III. THE 2ND Question-- **"Will we Know each other in Heaven?":**

A. Well let me begin with this: The Bible tells us that each person who will inherit Salvation→ **Is** carefully listed by name in the Lambs Book of Life... You might remember how in **Luke 10** when the 70 return from their first preaching mission→ (Jesus alludes to this when he tells them) **"Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven"--** Understanding that a Name denotes a distinct Identity (an Individual)... **You'll also remember how on the Mount of Transfiguration→ Moses & Elijah appear:** Obviously, they have kept their Identity... **& the** interesting thing is→ **That** the disciples Immediately Recognize who they are... **Now how did they do that?: I mean**, no one is wearing name tags here... **& So**, indications are that we will know each other in Heaven-- **I just** can't fathom God gathering His Family together as total Strangers... **Listen to what Paul says:** As he anticipates being re-acquainted in Heaven with those he helped bring to Christ (In **II Corinthians 1:14** where he says)→ **"Then on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, you will be proud**

of us in the same way we are proud of you"... **You will be YOU in heaven:** But also Restored / Amplified / & Untarnished by the Curse-- **For the first time** you will be precisely the person God created you to be... **& Each of us** will be United with saints we Love / **Introduced** to saints we Admire / **& We'll** live on a New Earth full of New Friends... **As one person responded** when asked on one occasion→ "Will we know each other in heaven?"... (& he said) "**We** will not really know each other→ **Until** we get to heaven"

***Now these last three questions can be very personal→ & Even Delicate**

IV. The 3rd Question is-- "What about Children in heaven?": **Everyone** who has been to a funeral of a child→ **Has** wondered about this... **& (by the way)** so have people throughout the Centuries... **I found it** interesting that especially in the Middle Ages→ A good bit was written about this very question... (e.g.) **Thomas Aquinas** (The great medieval theologian) offers this when he says: *"Human nature is deficient in a twofold manner: in one way because it has not yet obtained its ultimate perfection, and in a second way, because it has already receded from its ultimate perfection. Human nature is deficient in the first way in children, and in the second way in the aged. And therefore in each of these, human nature will be brought back by the resurrection of the state of its ultimate perfection, which is the state of youth, toward which the movement of growth is terminated, and from which the movement of degeneration begins"...* **You See, it's reasonable to assume that God will permit children that die→ To spend eternity in a more mature state: Most likely** at the Resurrection-- **A child** would receive the Glorified Body that will reflect who they would have become... **It is my opinion that children who have been Aborted will be in heaven: The** life God intended will not be denied it's destiny→ **B/C** of a choice a person did not have the right to make... **& I don't** believe that they will be in heaven as a fetus→ **But** the person God created them to be... **I Have wondered how old Adam was when God created him?: Although** he was actually one day old→ **He** would have appeared as a young dynamic man... **& It** seems reasonable to me→ **That** our bodies will reflect that same image... (e.g) **You & I might only remember our**

Grandparents as being very old & frail: & While we long to see them again→ **I don't** think that's how they will look in heaven... **I think** they will instead be more like those photographs we have of them→ **When** they were in the prime of life (When our grandparents first fell in love)... **I, too, plan on living a long time: But** I don't plan on living for eternity in a body ravaged by time... **Bottom line I believe: That we** will inherit New Bodies→ **That** will be at our Maximum capacity to enjoy eternity... **God** loves all of us young & old too much→ **To** have us spend eternity unable to Enjoy heaven or Himself at our fullest potential.

V. The 4th Question is-- "Why will there be no

Marriage in heaven?": **Let's** go back to what Jesus had to say to the Sadducees in **Luke 20**... **You'll remember** how that the Sadducees (who had a view of God that was so small→ They didn't believe in the Body Resurrection)-- **They** posed Jesus with the riddle of the Woman who married seven different men→ **& Then** asked Jesus who she would be married to in the next life... **& In V.34f** Jesus replied this way...

Marriage is for people here on earth. But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. And they will never die again. In this respect they will be like angels. They are children of God and children of the resurrection.

Allow me to Clarify here: **Jesus** isn't saying that we will be Angels / **Nor** is He saying that we will be Genderless-Clones... **Heaven** will have a place for both Maleness & Femaleness→ But not for Marriage... **Of course, the pressing question is "Why Not?": Well,** I believe that (primarily) Marriage on Earth→ **Was** designed by God to be a Signpost-- **Pointing** to our relationship with Christ as our collective Bridegroom... **& Once** we reach the destination→ **The** Signpost becomes unnecessary... **That's what Paul is pointing us to in Ephesians 5:** (when he says in **V. 31f**) **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking**

about Christ and the church"... **You See, earthly marriage is a Shadow (a Copy) of the True ultimate marriage:** In other words, the Purpose of marriage isn't to Replace Heaven→ **But** to Prepare us for it... Isn't one of marriages chief purposes to help men & women get to heaven-- Isn't that ultimately the measure of a successful marriage?...

Now, if you 're thinking here→ "How can it be heaven without my life partner?" (Let me say this): Just B/C Jesus tells us that institution of our earthly marriages will end→ **He** never suggests that deep relationships between married people will end... **Again** (as I have tried to point out), **there is Continuity between this world & the next:** Certainly, on the most meaningful levels-- The relationships (that are Grounded in Jesus / That have Mattered to us most) will carry-over (will be picked up with)→ **As** we live out Eternity on the New Heaven & New Earth... I Expect to have a very special relationship with Mary in heaven... **&** **By the way, do we really think heaven will be a place of less Joy (pleasure)?:** In heaven, ALL of our Desires will be met beyond even what we expect... **& Somehow** I don't think we'll find it disappointing.

VI. The final Question is this (maybe the hardest to consider)--

"How can it be heaven→ If those I love are not there?": The Hebrews writer tells us that **"For the JOY set before Him→ Jesus endured the Cross"**... Let me tell you this-- Jesus is Happy in heaven→ **Even though** Multitudes (whom He loves more deeply than we do) will not spend eternity with Him in heaven... **How can this be?:** Well perhaps The Glory of the next life→ **Will** simply Overwhelm the memory of this life... As Isaiah prophesied (in **Is.65:17**) **"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind"**... **Another thing to consider:** Is that in the next world→ **We** will come to grasp more perfectly an understanding of the Justice of God-- **& We** will unflinchingly affirm all of God's judgments... **& As** we stand before God & marvel at His absolute Holiness & Purity-- We'll not find ourselves questioning why God could permit anyone to go to Hell→ **But Rather** we'll be Overwhelmed by Grace / **& We'll Marvel**

at how He could have received anyone in Heaven... **& Remember:** **God Himself** said that He would see to it→ **That** nobody in heaven will Grieve-- (He said) **"I will wipe away your tears....There will be no more crying or sorrow"...**

VII. Well, these can be difficult questions: **& I** don't pretend to have Perfect answers... **I believe** there is an answer that is perfect-- **& That's** to believe that the God of heaven is Bigger than our Concerns... **During the beginning of WWII, King George VI of England:** **Ordered** what was called **Operation Pied Piper**→ **Which** set in motion the Evacuation of the children from the bomb torn areas of London... **& So**, children by the thousands were taken by their parents to trains stations throughout London→ **So they** could be Relocated to safer parts of the country to wait out the worst parts of the war... **One story emerging from these moments centers on a Brother & Sister who had just been placed on one of these trains:** **Of course**, these children were Scared being separated from their parents→ **Along with** the Anxiety of not knowing where they were going... **& As the train pulls out:** **The** little girl starts to cry... **& Brushing** away his own tears-- **The Brother** puts his arms around his sister→ (& says) **"I don't know where we're going either→ But the King knows....So, don't worry"...** **That's** the best answer I can offer you→ **When** we have questions about heaven...