

Advent

What is your image of Heaven?

Popular Culture: Grandma looking at us from heaven

Why?

Would she not be busy praising God?

"After this I heard what seemed a great multitude in heaven, saying "Hallelujah""

△ John seeing this in Rev 19:1-9 onwards

Do we belong in Heaven?

New heaven and a new Earth

△ Rev 21:1: Old heaven and earth passed away

Holy City, New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth

△ Rev 21: 2

See, the home of God is among the mortals ... he will dwell with his peoples ... and death will be no more

△ Rev 21:3-4

New Jerusalem: 1500 miles, cubed (12,000 stadia cubed)

△ Rev 22:16 - big enough for everyone

So our final place is on earth - a new earth, but still earth

Jesus will return a 2nd time

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷ After that, **we who are still alive and are left** will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.

¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

△ 1 Thess 4

He returns to earth

The death will be raised first

And those who are alive and left are then also joined with Jesus

So do we really go to heaven when we die?

Or are we sleeping in death until we are resurrected?

This image seems to fit what Jesus tells us in our reading from Matthew

The end of times in Matthew

Jesus speaks to the Disciples about what will happen at the end of times

Starting with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem

△ Matt 24:1-3

Time of persecutions and impersonations of Jesus

△ Matth 24:4-25

And a final distress of earth and Jesus returning

Gathering the elect from the four winds and from one end of the heavens to the other

So maybe we are in heaven?

Maybe we don't need to know

Comparison to flood and Noah

Jesus compares this time to the time of Noah

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

△ Matth 24

Noah and family was saved

But the others died - not knowing what would happen

Jesus says that they "were taken away"

So will it be when Jesus returns

⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

It is the ones who remain who are saved

Not the ones who are taken, we don't know what happens to them

Surprising?

To me it was - I always thought the ones who were taken were the lucky ones

But no: The ones who remain are lucky

As those are the ones who meet with Jesus, as per Thessalonians

Implications

Those who remain are at work

And will continue to work

The earth and heaven will be renewed

And maybe Jesus even asks us to help him renew it!

God loves work (6 days and 1 day he rested)

He has given us work

And he will continue to give us work

Even after his second coming

When?

Unkown... Even Jesus does not know

But be prepared - keep watch

Like you keep watch that no one breaks into your house

He will return when we least expect him!

⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

But Jesus urges us to keep watch and be ready!

There are signs - but they are not guarantees

Because if we knew when Jesus would return

We would not need to watch all the time

And there is judgement for those who are not ready to receive Jesus again

Like the servant who is not prepared for his master's return

How do we keep watch?

1. Believe in Him

Even if it is difficult

Even when everything points the other way

Jesus warns for false prophets and false teachings

Help each other to believe

Repent for the Kingdom of God is here

The inbetween times - the yet and not yet

Jesus has given us his Spirit

so that we can become his body

Not to rest but to work!

2. Work

But he also gives us responsibility for what he has given us

He put us in charge of all his possessions

And in relationship with fellow people

That includes being stewards of the Earth he has given us

Just because there will be a new heaven and new earth

God does not waste anything and will recycle

He may even asks us to clean up the mess that humanity made of it

We have an ongoing responsibility for Creation

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

△ Gen 2

Our responsibility to take care of the world does not go away

We need to take care of those who God put around us

We need to support each other

Not Like the servant who was put in charge:

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, "My master is staying away a long time," ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards

3 Pray

He asks us to intercede for the church, and for the world

He asks us also to intercede for his will and his plans in this world

And for us?

Good at 1. Believe and 3. Pray

But what about 2. Work: take responsibility for our part of Creation and the people that God has out around us?