

The Gables – Rewards in Heaven

Opening Story:

Heaven - It's All Free (from

<http://www.jokesnjokes.net/funny.jokes.amusing.humor.laughs/Religion/heaven001.htm>

This 85-year-old couple, having been married almost 60 years, had died in a car crash. They had been in good health the last ten years, mainly due to her interest in health food and exercise. When they reached the pearly gates, St. Peter took them to their mansion, which was decked out with a beautiful kitchen and master bath suite and Jacuzzi. As they "ooohed and aaahed" the old man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost.

"It's free," Peter replied, "this is Heaven."

Next they went out back to see the championship golf course that the home backed up to. They would have golfing privileges everyday and each week the course changed to a new one representing the great golf courses on earth.

The old man asked, "What are the green fees?"

Peter's reply, "This is heaven, you play for free."

Next they went to the clubhouse and saw the lavish buffet lunch with the cuisines of the world laid out.

"How much to eat?" asked the old man.

"Don't you understand yet? This is heaven, it is free!" Peter replied.

"Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol foods?" the old man asked timidly. "That's the best part...you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like and you never get fat and you never get sick. This is Heaven."

The old man looked at his wife and said, "You and your bran muffins. I could have been here ten years ago!"

What will heaven really be like? Will we just sit around all day on the clouds playing a harp, bored out of our minds, not having any fun?

Actually, the Bible tells us a very different story. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'".

So, we can't even imagine how great heaven will be.

Dialog between Rick & Donna:

Donna: What is heaven?

Rick: There are three heavens, as we know it:

- First (Atmospheric) Heaven – This is the troposphere. It extends about six miles out from the earth and contains the air and moisture that we need to survive.
- Second (Celestial) Heaven – The known universe: the moon, planets, sun and stars.
- Third Heaven – This is the dwelling place of God. Paul was given a glimpse of it as noted in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

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Donna: When do we go to heaven? Is it right after we die or do we fall asleep for a while first?

Rick: When Jesus was hanging on the cross, the repentant thief turned to Him and said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* So, we go to heaven immediately after we die and we will see Jesus face-to-face.

“Falling asleep” is mentioned in the Bible, but it is a euphemism for death.

Donna: What about purgatory?

Rick: In Old Testament times, before Jesus came to earth as our Messiah, everyone went to a place called Hades when they died. Those who looked forward to the Messiah coming went to the “paradise” side of Hades. Those who did not trust in the Messiah were sent to “punishment” side of Hades. This is illustrated in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus found in Luke 16:19-26:

¹⁹ *“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

²² *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell,^[c] where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’*

²⁵ *“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’*

After Jesus died on the cross He went to Hades, and set the Old Testament saints free, taking them to be with Him and God. Paradise is no longer in Hades, but is in the third heaven above the earth (Isaiah 63:15). We will have spiritual bodies and be with God in an Intermediate Heaven until Jesus comes again. Every Christian who dies today will go straight to heaven and have a spiritual body. There is no purgatory.

Donna: I thought we were going to get new real bodies, not spiritual bodies?

Rick: We will get real bodies after Jesus comes again at a time called the “rapture” described in 1 Thessalonians 4:

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¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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 forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

So, Christians who died before the rapture, and who were alive during the rapture, will be reunited with their bodies and taken up to heaven to be with Jesus. Our bodies will be made perfect in every way. They won't get tired or injured. Our bodies will be free of sin and decay and won't age.

Donna: What happens after that?

Rick: Well, there are different opinions on what happens after the rapture, but I believe there will be seven years of tribulation on earth. God will purge the earth of sin. The earth we live on will be destroyed and then God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus will come again and establish his kingdom on earth and rule for a thousand years during a period called The Millennium. After The Millennium, Jesus will turn the kingdom over to God the Father. Heaven will then be opened up and the City of God will descend upon the earth. It will be 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 long, and 1,500 miles high. If it is constructed like an apartment building, it would be approximately 396,000 stories high (at twenty feet per story) with each floor being about eight times the size of Texas. Thus, God will make his dwelling place with men and we will live with Him forever.

Donna: What will the new heaven and new earth be like?

Rick: Heaven will be surrounded by a wall 216 feet thick. It will have twelve gates, each one guarded by an angel. The city will be built with pure gold and other precious stones. Outside of the heavenly city there will be farms, vineyards, and all sorts of animals. However the animals won't kill each other for food. Isaiah 11:5-7 says:

*The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling^[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
⁷ The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

Donna: When will we be rewarded for our work on earth?

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Rick: There are different opinions on this, but I believe that when the rapture occurs, all the saints will be taken up to heaven during the tribulation. During the tribulation will be a judgment called the Bema Judgment. That is the time during which we will stand before God and He will evaluate our lives and give us our rewards. This is illustrated in Luke 19:11-26:

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'

"He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'

"Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'

"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow?'²³ Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

"Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

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“He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.’”

Donna: How will God judge us? Does He know everything we’ve done?

Rick: Yes. Proverbs 5:21 says, “For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.”

Donna: What will we do in heaven?

Rick: Rewards will differ depending on how we served God while we were on earth and what our gifts are. For all of us, there will be:

- Inexpressible joy
- Endless fellowship with God, other saints, and family member who have gone to heaven before us
- Times of worship, praise, adoration
- Opportunities to serve (Revelation 22:3)
- Opportunity to explore the universe and use our creativity
- No more suffering or tears

We will each have special duties depending on our skills and gifts:

- Some of us will be ruling cities. There will be a chain of command, so many of us will have subordinates and those we report to. No one will “Lord it over us.”
- There will be homebuilding on the new earth (Isaiah 65:21).
- Some will be playing instruments (Revelation 5:8)
- Some will be singing (Revelation 5:9)
- Some will farm (Isaiah 30:23)
- Some will maintain orchards (Isaiah 65:21)
- Some will raise livestock
- Some will fish
- Some will engage in intellectual pursuits

Heaven, therefore will be a joyous place with plenty to do and plenty of time to do it.

Will we be seeing all of you there?