

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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HEAVEN HOLDS ALL TO ME

Cody Westbrook

“Heaven holds all to me, brighter its glory will be; joy without measure will be my treasure, Heaven holds all to me.”

The words of the soul-stirring hymn written by the late brother Tillit S. Teddlie have thrilled the hearts of God’s people for decades. We often sing “Heaven holds all to me” but does it really? And, why? Do we want to go to Heaven more than anything else? Do we ever contemplate what that place will be like and why we want to be there? Heaven holds all to me because...

It is not Hell

Paul wrote, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). Our God is a God of goodness and severity (Rom. 11:22). When He “judge(s) the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31) those who do not know Him and those who have not obeyed the gospel will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Hell is a real place—just as real as Heaven. The Bible describes it as “everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). Hell is “the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13), “outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 22:13), and a place of “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46). Contemplating the reality of eternity in Hell sends chills down the spine and is more than enough to motivate us to do whatever is necessary in order to avoid it (cf. Matt. 5:29-30, etc.). Heaven holds all to me because I do not want to be in Hell.

My God is there

Solomon declared, “...for God is in Heaven and you are on earth, therefore let your words be few” (Ecc. 5:2). Heaven is God’s “holy habitation” (Deu. 26:15). His throne is in Heaven (Ps. 11:4),

He looks down from Heaven (Ps. 53:2), He speaks from Heaven (Deu. 4:36), and He rules from Heaven (Ps. 103:19). Jesus referred to Heaven as “My Father’s house” (John 14:1). To be in Heaven is to be in the dwelling place of our Creator; the One who loves us, provides for us, sustains us, and satisfies us. Heaven holds all to me because it is the dwelling place of my God and spending eternity there means spending eternity in His presence.

My Savior is there

Luke wrote, “Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:51). Just as He had promised, when His work on earth was done, Jesus returned to His Father in Heaven. He said to Mary,

Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God (John 20:17).

...I want to
see Him, and
worship Him,
and be with
Him forever.

He said to His disciples, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father” (John 16:28). Jesus now sits on His throne at the right hand of God, in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:20) and He is in “Heaven itself” to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb. 9:24). The Lamb of God who is the King of Kings and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah occupies His rightful

place in Heaven. Heaven holds all to me because I want to see Him, and worship Him, and be with Him forever.

The Redeemed of all Ages will be there

Shortly before His death, Jesus comforted the apostles by revealing to them that they would be able to be with Him forever in the Father's house.

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

In Revelation 14:1 the apostle John, who heard the words of Jesus in John 14:1-3, saw "a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand." The number is representative of the redeemed of all ages. When the Lord returns to "receive" (John 14:3) His servants and the gates of Heaven are opened, all of God's faithful from every age will be present and accounted for. Heaven holds all to me because I know that it will be a place of great reunion with those who have gone on before. What a glorious day that will be!

It is good for us to reflect on Heaven. It comforts us through this life and motivates us to live in a way that is pleasing to our God. As we sing, "Heaven holds all to me" we ought to reflect on why that place is so precious to us.

SW



"MORE ABOUT FASTING WOULD I KNOW..."

Andy Baker '06

“Why would I ever voluntarily miss a meal?" Food is in abundance. So many great restaurants have neon signs lit and today's specials clamoring for attention. So why would we ever want to do something so strange as to fast—that is, to willfully abstain from food for a spiritual purpose? As was noted in the article two weeks ago, food is not the limit of the things from which we can fast. Someone might fast from video games or from TV or from a phone (yikes!). Anything can be set aside for a spiritual time of devotion to God. Consider Biblical purposes of fasting:

When we know we've sinned and need careful reflection on our lives. Jonah, after disobedience, fasted for

three days while in the belly of the fish—quite the timeout (3:5). Paul was without sight after meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus and fasted and prayed while in darkness (Acts 9:9). Both Daniel and Nehemiah in confessing the national sins of Israel did so with fasting. Sin being examined carefully means values must be examined carefully (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Fasting is a tool that can help give clarity to God's will and a refocus on that purpose (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5).

When in times of devoted prayer. Coupled in many cases with prayer is this discipline of fasting (see Ex. 24:18; 2 Chron. 20:1-ff; Est. 4:16; Eze. 8:21; Acts 13:1-3). These often go hand in hand. Fasting strengthens prayer in that it strengthens focus on God's will. When we fast, it's almost as if we're saying to God, "I love You and I am devoted to You more than..." When fasting and prayer are together, it helps remind us that God is our sustenance and what He provides is far better than what our physical bodies want (Matt. 4:4).

When we are in need of self-discipline. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 teaches that the body is something that must be brought into submission to the will of God. Where do my appetites lie? When I sit down to the table, do I desire that food more than I ever have the Word of God (cf. Job 23:12; Luke 12:23)? When I think about my next meal or the next text message I'm going to be getting more than I do about the will of God, it could be I am a slave to my appetite instead of my appetite being a slave to God (Phil. 3:19).

There are many physicians who will prescribe fasting for purely physical benefits. Surely we might be able to see that the practice of fasting for spiritual reasons absolutely has spiritual benefits...if we would but use the tool.

The Messenger, The Maud Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, October 8, 2017.

SW

"THERE IS NOTHING IN A NAME"

Tom Wacaster

It is quite interesting to listen to the feeble attempts of men to justify those things for which they have no authority. After more than 45 years of preaching I have learned that once a person has decided to embark upon a certain course of action that is so blatantly opposed to the word of God, reason is thrown out the proverbial window.

Some years ago Johnnie Ann and I were making multiple trips to Ukraine to help establish and strengthen the Lord's church in Poltava. We were only allowed to remain in the country for 90 days, so we would do what we could during that time, return home, and reapply for

a visa and get back to Poltava as quickly as possible. That was a period of great interest regarding matters pertaining to religion in that country, and it provided a unique opportunity to preach and teach the truth with the full expectation that our labor would yield visible fruit for the Lord. But you don't have to go to Ukraine to hear this oft-stated and ill-advised excuse for failing to abide by God's divine authority when it comes to the name we are to wear as God's children, or the terms that we are to use to refer to the church. It just so happens that an incident on one of our mission trips provided an opportunity to demonstrate the foolishness of those who might attempt to claim, "There is nothing in a name." It was a great occasion to "answer a fool according to his folly" (Proverbs 26:5).

His name was Sergei. He had been converted to the Lord prior to our having met him on our first trip to Poltava. He served as our contact/sponsor/interpreter on each of those mission trips. On occasion he would meet us at the airport in Kiev and escort us to Poltava. He was diligent, good at what he did, and he was wise beyond his years. I cannot remember the details as to how the meeting came about, but Sergei introduced us to two missionaries from Australia who were members of the Church of The Brethren. They showed some interest in our work and wanted to discuss some matters in private. I agreed to meet with them. "George" and "John" were their names. Both spoke good English with the typical Australian accent, which made for pleasant conversation. It also eliminated the need for Sergei to interpret, breaking him loose to work on the Ukrainian preacher that had come with these men. Upon our meeting, "John" suggested that we combine our efforts in order to make a greater impact for the cause of Christ. I simply told him that we could not extend fellowship to those who demonstrated a disrespect for the authority of Christ. I told him there were too many doctrinal issues that separated us and any attempt at cooperation between the two of us could only produce difficulty, not to mention that fellowship with error would render us partaker in their false doctrines (2 John 10-11). "Such as?" came his reply. I immediately focused on the names they wore. "How can we even begin to discuss unity when we can't even agree on the names and terms that we use? Where, for example is the term 'Church of the Brethren' mentioned in the Bible?" His response was so typical of those who cannot see beyond their proverbial noses when it comes to such matters: "There is nothing in a name!" This is where the conversation became somewhat humorous. I responded to John, "George, there IS something in a name!" He quickly responded, "I'm John; he's George." I continued, "Ok George, whatever; let's continue." Again, he responded, "No, I'm John, he's George!" I continued, "George, turn

with me to Colossians 3:17." I was abruptly interrupted, "Look, I'm John, NOT George!" I could hear the frustration in his voice; he must of thought by now he was talking to some dunce, unable to remember even the simplest of matters such as the name of person. I then made my point: "John, I thought you said there was nothing in a name! If you are so intent on my calling you by your proper name, how do you think Christ feels about you calling the church by the wrong name?" The point was made, the conversation concluded, the study ended, and we went our separate way. I don't think he ever got the point I was trying to make.

Names ARE important, and there IS something in a name. If you doubt that for a minute, why not try cashing a check made out to someone other than yourself. How much success do you suppose you would have borrowing money from a bank if you refused to sign with your legal name? Why, then, do we assume that when it comes to religion, we can attach any name we select to identify the church? It is His church (Matthew 16:16-18), He paid the price (Acts 20:28), and it is His followers, and only His followers, that will be saved (Eph. 5:23). We are told that there is "none other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13), and the only terms used to designate the church all include a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in one fashion or the other. "The church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2), "the church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23), "the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16); these are terms the Holy Spirit used to designate the church for which Jesus shed His blood. Where in God's word do we read of the "Church of the Brethren," the "Baptist Church," "Pentecostal Church," "Seventh Day Adventist Church," "Harvest Tabernacle Church," or "Cowboy Church," to name just a few.

The God given name for His people, as well as that soul saving institution, the church, is extremely important. The Bible tells us that the disciples were called "Christians" first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Why can we not be satisfied with the name provided by the Holy Spirit, and glorify God in THAT name (1 Pet. 4:16)? Would to God that names devised by human beings forever cease, and His name be glorified.

Let us wear the name of Christ only. If you have heard that there is nothing in a name, don't you believe it for a second. Hold fast to God's word, and make sure you have divine authority for all that you do in matters pertaining to religion (Col. 3:17). Look again at 1 Peter 4:16 and tell me, "There's Nothing In A Name"!

SW

Record for the Week of October 27, 2019

Bible Class 138
Morning Assembly 226
Evening Assembly 121
Iglesia de Cristo
Morning Assembly N/A
Contribution \$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

David Baker, SWSBS '88 passed away last week.

Samuel Ramirez, SWSBS '15 will have surgery this Wednesday, October 30th.

Health Concerns: Mark DeAvila, Lucile Johnson, Diana Rodriguez, Sue Shamburger, Bonnie Thetford, Bud Wade, Angela Young, Jo Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Rodney Boes, Olivia Carson, Caleb Crouchet, Bill Ellison, Ada Fleming, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, June Lee, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cynthia Puente, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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WORSHIP AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES: Sunday, Bible Classes 9:30 am, Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm

Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm

RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBK, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life