

Zion's River—Discipleship

Course: Spiritual DNA

Session 6—Our Country Called Heaven

June 13th, 2023

1 Our Focus

- The Importance of Spiritual DNA
 - **1 Corinthians 4:15–16 (ESV)** — ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. **For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.** ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me.
- The Core DNA of Zion's River
 - The "Gospel of the Kingdom" is always the message.
 - God's love is always the answer.
 - God's Spirit is always the path.
 - Heaven is always a *now* reality.

2 When we think about heaven, what comes to mind?

- Our Natural Thoughts
 - Puffy white clouds, park-like setting, and constant music playing in the background.
 - Worshipping endlessly, day and night.
 - Heaven is an escape to perfect peace and rest.
 - Heaven is our reward after suffering through this existence.
 - We may not even actually think about heaven very often...because that has to do with death.
 - Our views and desire of heaven tend to be a function of our current status or situation.
- The Truth
 - Heaven is not at a distance nor is it a destination—it's infused with this realm and just beyond our physical perception.
 - Heaven has its own language and culture.
 - Heaven is working and creating, eternally and infinitely.
 - Heaven is not bound to space and time like we are.
 - Heaven is not a reward but a place of fully and continually becoming.
 - Heaven gives us perspective and power for this life and its ills.
 - Heaven is expansive—there are all kinds of beings that fill the universe and all other universes.
 - Heaven is on mission.

3 Heaven is more than a destination.

- Heaven is another realm behind or infused into this one.
 - **Mark 1:9–11 (CSB) — 9** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. **10** As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.”
 - Heaven is simply veiled from our sight—it’s far more like another dimension to our reality rather than a distant land.
 - **2 Corinthians 12:1–4 (ESV) — 1** I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. **3** And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— **4** and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.
 - It’s possible to have access to the spiritual realm.
 - **Luke 23:43 (ESV) — 43** And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
 - When we die, we go directly into the presence of the Lord. (See also **Philippians 1:23–24**)
- Heaven’s promise empowers us in this existence.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:1–10 (ESV) — 1** For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, **3** if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. **4** For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. **5** He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. **6** So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, **7** for we walk by faith, not by sight. **8** Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **9** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.
 - Our current mortal bodies scream for the body made for the other realm.
 - This realm makes us hungry for the Presence of the Lord.
- Heaven has real structure.
 - **John 14:2–3 (ESV) — 2** In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.
 - Whatever heaven’s dimension is like, it has an infrastructure within which we can accomplish our divine purpose.

- Heaven creates for the believer a sustainable mission.
 - **Hebrews 11:13–16 (ESV) — 13** These all died in faith, **not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.** **14** For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **15** If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** But as it is, they **desire a better country**, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.
 - Heaven has a completely different culture and texture that is our true citizenship.

- Heaven grounds our allegiance in eternity.
 - **Philippians 3:20–21 (CSB) — 20** **Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.** **21** He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.

- Heaven fills us with a unique kind of worship.
 - **Revelation 4-5**
 - They constantly sing “Holy, holy, holy...” because every time they look into the person of God, they see new dimensions of who He is.
 - God doesn’t need my worship (that would make Him egotistical); worship is a natural response to what I see.
 - That should challenge the way we see worship...I’m not only worshipping what I know but what I discover.

- 4 **A Prophetic Vision and Mission—the Stairway of Heaven**
 - God has given us a vision for ministry—the House of God is a gate church!
 - **Genesis 28:12 (ESV) — 12** **And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.** **And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!**
 - **Genesis 28:16–17 (ESV) — 16** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” **17** And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! **This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.**”

 - We carry the sovereignty of heaven under a “torn” heaven.
 - **Mark 1:9–11 (CSB) — 9** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. **10** As soon as he came up out of the water, **he saw the heavens being torn open** and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.”

- We pursue the supernatural work of Jesus as a witness of heaven.
 - **John 1:50–51 (CSB)** — 50 Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” 51 Then he said, “Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”
- Our God-given mission grants us access to the spiritual realm.
 - **Acts 7:55–56 (CSB)** — 55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 He said, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

5 Baptism with the Holy Spirit

- Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a work of Jesus.
 - **Luke 3:16–17 (ESV)** — ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”
 - It is a work that sets you apart for a higher purpose.
- The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a work of empowerment for a higher purpose.
 - **Luke 24:46–49 (ESV)** — ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers for the work of evangelism.
 - **Acts 1:6–8 (ESV)** — ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit introduces a whole new way of relating to God and to life!
 - **Acts 2:1–4**
 - Here, the “speaking in tongues” is not the same as what we hear in church or in prayer.
 - See **Genesis 11:1–9** for prophetic understanding.
 - The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a work of *validation*, but a work of *empowerment*.

6 Translating heaven through “Praying in the Holy Spirit”

- See **Acts 8:14-19; 10:44-48**.

- **Romans 8:26–28 (ESV)** — ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
 - The Holy Spirit knows your story; He knows the story of humanity!

- **Ephesians 6:16–18 (ESV)** — ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
 - The sword of the Spirit = the *rhema* of God
 - We get to come in agreement with the Holy Spirit! (See **Matthew 18:18-20**)

- **1 Corinthians 14:1–4 (ESV)** — ¹ Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.
 - God has given us a precious gift to “build up” ourselves.

7 Our faithfulness effects the reality of heaven in our lives.

- Everything that is Holy Spirit and heaven are received by faith.
 - **Luke 11:13 (ESV)** — **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- Every action has eternal implications.
 - **Matthew 6:19–21 (CSB)** — **19** “Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- **1 Corinthians 3:11–15 (ESV)** — **11** For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12** Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— **13** each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **14** If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. **15** If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

- Getting to heaven is a celebratory achievement of overcoming this life.
 - **Matthew 8:11 (CSB)** — **11** I tell you that many will come from east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

 - **Matthew 26:29 (ESV)** — **29** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

- 8 **At the End**
 - Our ultimate destination is not eternity in heaven (the spiritual realm where God now resides)!
 - **Revelation 21:1–4 (CSB)** — **1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. **3** Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.
 - God creates a new earth for us to rule with Him in.
 - We'll have another opportunity to make the Edenic dream real!

 - **2 Peter 3:13 (CSB)** — **13** But based on his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.
 - Things will ultimately look like God intended.