

Week 6, February 19, 2012 **Exploring Heaven**
What is the Joy of Heaven?

When people describe some experience, eating chocolate for instance, as heavenly, what do they mean? Is that “spotten” (Dutch for ‘to trifle or mock at what is most sacred’)?

What experiences for you are closest to Heaven, or remind you of Heaven the most?

What is the difference between pleasure, happiness and joy?

Tell or describe experiences of joy from your life.

Why does CS Lewis think play has something of Heaven in it?

What according to Kreeft is “the plain bare bones of Christianity”?

What is the secret to experiencing joy?

Main Thought

Week One: Heaven gives hope, purpose and meaning to life on earth.

Week Two: The Redeemed will not be disembodied spirits, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe.

Week Three: “Each soul will be eternally engaged in giving away to all the rest that which it receives.”

Week Four: Heaven is earth restored

Week Five: Hell is separation from God, loneliness. The Bible’s teaching about Hell places a choice before each of us – to choose for God or against God in all we do, every day.

Week Six: ????

Handout

From: CS Lewis, Letters to Malcolm

Surely we must suppose the life of the blessed to be utterly spontaneous; to be the complete reconciliation of boundless freedom with order – with the most delicately adjusted, supple, intricate and beautiful order? How can you find any image of this in the “serious” activities either of our natural or of our (present) spiritual life? Either in our precarious and heart-broken affections or in the Way which is always, in some degree, the Way of the Cross? No, Malcolm. It is only in our “hours off”, only in our moments of permitted festivity, that we find an analogy. Dance and game are frivolous, unimportant, down here; *for “down here” is not their natural place.* Here, they are moments rest from life we were placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of ends. Joy is the serious business of heaven.

From: GK Chesterton, Orthodoxy

The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels ... never concealed his tears. He showed them plainly on his open face. Yet He concealed something... He never restrained his anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the temple and asked men how they

expected to escape the damnation of Hell. Yet, He restrained something. I say it with reverence: there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that He hid from all men when He went up a mountain to pray... There was one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth.

From: CS Lewis, The Weight of Glory

The faint, far-off results of these energies which God's creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountain-head that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy.

From: Peter Kreeft, Heaven: the Heart's Deepest Longing pp172-3

All things work together for good for those who love God. Every atom in the quadrillion-mile universe and every "chance" event in its trillion-year history is deliberately and perfectly planned and controlled by God for the ultimate end of our good, our heavenly joy. Augustine says, "God would not allow any evil to exist in his works unless his omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil." The solution to the problem of evil is time. It's a fairy tale; and all God's lovers live happily ever after. This is not fantasy or mysticism or extravaganza, it's the plain bare bones of Christianity. It is not a philosophy, a piece of human speculation; it's not even a theology, a human interpretation of divine revelation. It's a divinely declared fact. More, this long-run, after-death heavenly joy is also present now, even if we don't see it or believe it or take advantage of it.