

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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What difference does it make? Why is Jesus in heaven now?

We learn from Ecclesiastes 4:12 that “a three-fold cord is not quickly broken”. Our own experience knows that to be true. Building on that, we can readily accept that each additional strand increases the overall strength of a cord or rope, so that a seven-fold cord will be very strong indeed. I want to bring before you, from the Bible, a seven-fold spiritual cord of immense strength; namely, seven reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven now. There might well be others, but I will be satisfied if you accept these seven. In doing so, we shall provide ourselves with substantial answers to the question, “What difference does it make, that Jesus is now in heaven?”

Pulling together what I have in mind, I can summarise what I have to say in this simple way:

1. Jesus is in heaven now because of **Who He is**, in the glory of His Person.
2. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He is** inherently in Himself, His Moral Perfection.
3. Jesus is in heaven now because of **how He lived** here in this world. Heaven is the only appropriate terminus of the perfect life that He lived.
4. Jesus is in heaven now because of **the work He did** upon the Cross of Calvary at the end of His life here in this world.
5. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He is presently doing**, as God's High Priest above, in heaven, in the very presence of God.
6. Jesus is in heaven now because of **where we are going**. He is our Forerunner in heaven.
7. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He will be** in all His glory, in His future universal supremacy, in His kingdom, the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Each of these points is sufficient in itself. Together, they give us every confidence for understanding and accepting that the Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of the Universe and Saviour of the world, has every right and reason to be in heaven at this very moment. This is for the glory of God, the honour of the Lord Jesus, and for the present and eternal blessing of all of us Who have trusted Him as our Saviour, and confessed Him as our Lord.

The vital necessity of His present presence in heaven, and the difference that it makes, will emerge as we do so.

Let us go through them one by one.

1. Jesus is in heaven now because of *Who He is*, in the glory of His Person

Scripture abounds with clear references to the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even before He came into the world, the prophet Isaiah spoke of Him as “The Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6). Having come into the world, the Apostle John says of Him, “The Word was God” (John 1:1). Paul says of Him in Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the Invisible God”. That is, He is indeed God, the very God. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us in chapter 1:1-3, “God has spoken in His Son”, and again, “He is the brightness of the glory of God, the exact expression of His substance”. In Romans 9:5, Paul refers to the Lord Jesus as “Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever”.

Heaven is God's dwelling place, His very home. Because Jesus is God, He has every right to be in heaven because of Who He is in the glory of His own Person.

2. Jesus is in heaven now because of *what He is*, His Moral Perfection

In Luke 10, we read about a religious lawyer, a specialist in the knowledge and interpretation of the Law of Moses. In verse 25 we are told that he stood up, and had the audacity to try to put the Lord Jesus on the spot by asking Him, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The Lord Jesus said to him, in effect, “You are the expert, you tell me. What does the Law say? How do you understand it?” The lawyer gave a word-perfect answer. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”

You couldn't get a better summing up of what God requires from man than that. The Lord gave him full credit. "Thou hast rightly said."

What did not arise in that discussion, but is clear in so many scriptures, is the fact that of all the people that have ever lived on earth, only one person has ever fulfilled those criteria in full, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

There are many scriptures which develop the theme of the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus. The Word of God gives us types, illustrations, parables, allegories, and, of course, many clear statements to establish this beyond any possible doubt. To mention only a few, there is the manna in Exodus 16, the Meal Offering in Leviticus 2, many of the Psalms, particularly Psalm 16, the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the consistent teaching of the New Testament Epistles. Each confirms in its own way, that the Lord Jesus was, and is, completely without any flaw or moral imperfection that could rightly exclude Him from the presence of God in heaven.

To pick out one example, Hebrews 1:9 (quoting from Psalm 45:7) says, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity".

Overall, only of the Lord Jesus can it be rightly said that there is absolutely no trace of anything that could exclude Him from the presence of God in heaven because of any imperfection or flaw. Certainly, there has never been any semblance of sin that can be attributed to the thoughts, words or deeds of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle John says, in 1 John 3:5, "In Him is no sin". The Apostle Paul writes, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He knew no sin". 1 Peter 2:22 gives us Peter's statement, "He did no sin".

3. Jesus is in heaven now because of *how He lived*. It is the only appropriate terminus of the perfect life that He lived here in this world

Under the previous heading, we considered what is true of the Lord Jesus inherently, His moral perfection, in Himself, altogether apart from what He did in practice. Moving on from there, as a separate, distinct matter, it is also true that in the life that He lived on earth, day by day, there was nothing in anything that He did or said, that showed any fault, or imperfection, and certainly no trace of sin. In other words, what He was inherently, in Himself, was confirmed in everything He did while living on earth. We have already thought about the tributes by the Apostles John, Peter and Paul. Now think about what even His enemies and general observers were obliged to say about Him at the end of His life.

Three times over, the Roman governor Pilate had to say, "I find no fault in Him at all". In Luke 23:41, we read that one of those crucified with Him, said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." The centurion responsible for ensuring that all was done properly glorified God saying, "Certainly, this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47).

In The Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a peculiarly appropriate comment in 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God".

This statement gives us a delightful thought. Heaven is the only appropriate terminus for the perfect life that the Lord Jesus lived on earth. There was nothing at all that emerged in His perfect life that could in any way justify His exclusion from heaven. Indeed, in a most positive way, His perfect life was a wonderful additional reason in itself for the presence of Jesus in heaven now, not only because it is His home in virtue of His deity, but also now, additionally, as a Man, perfect in all His ways. What a comment on His spotless life on earth, that the only appropriate terminus for such a life was, and is, to be seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven.

4. Jesus is in heaven now because of *what He did* upon the Cross of Calvary at the end of His life here in this world

The creation of the world was in itself a mighty work. However, it was brought into being that it might be the platform for an even greater work. That was the work of the Cross; the work of Calvary.

Scripture plainly teaches that this was in itself a substantive reason for the present presence of Jesus in heaven.

Philippians 2:8-9 tell us: "Being found in fashion as a man, (Jesus) humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." We are further told in Hebrews 1:3: "Who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" Then, again, in Hebrews 10:2: "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God"

There could not be a greater tribute to the perfection of the work of Christ in dying at Calvary than that.

5. Jesus is in heaven now because of *what He is presently doing*, as God's High Priest above.

In 1 Peter 5:7, we are told, "Cast every care upon Him, Jesus; because he careth for you". What a privilege! And yet, this is only half of the story.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, above all books in the New Testament, describes and amplifies what this involves. From the middle of chapter 2 up to the end of chapter 7, we are taught in detail about how the Lord's priestly grace is available to us to help us at any time, any place, in any situation. Chapter 8 onwards to almost the end of chapter 10 teaches that He relieves us of all the pain and distress we experience in this life, so that He can conduct us into the very presence of God, a praising and worshipping people. In Hebrews 8:2, He is called the Minister of the sanctuary. That is, He is like the composer of a major symphony who then steps personally onto the podium and conducts a huge orchestra, blending together the contributions of all the varied instruments, large and small, in one grand, majestic harmony.

6. Jesus is in heaven now because of *where we are going*. He is our Forerunner.

When the Lord Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure from them to return to heaven, He said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:3). The questions might arise in our minds, "How long did it take the Lord to prepare that place?" "Is that work of preparation completed?" The answer to both questions is quite simple. Oh, yes! The work is indeed completed. And for a very good reason! The work of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary prepares **us** for a place in heaven. And His presence in heaven prepares the **place** for us to be there. The Epistle to the Hebrews is thus able to state with full assurance, "(our) Forerunner is for us entered (into heaven), even Jesus" (Hebrews 6:20).

7. Jesus is in heaven now because of *what He will be* in all His glory, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in His future universal supremacy in the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

We learn from Acts 17:31: "(God) hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Again, in Philippians 2:9-11: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And Hebrews 1:13 teaches us that God has said to Jesus, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool".

The Lord Himself taught His disciples, in Matthew 24:27 and 30: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be ... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"

The climactic event which will herald the beginning of that mighty kingdom is given in Revelation 19:11-16: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

How clear the picture is! The Lord Jesus Christ will come out of heaven in power and great glory, to subdue His enemies and set up His Kingdom. Revelation 20:1-7 say it will last for a full period of 1000 years, and will never ever be superseded by another earthly kingdom. Just as clearly, He cannot come out of heaven unless He is first of all in heaven immediately prior to His coming out of heaven.

Summing up, is Jesus in heaven now? And, if so, is there good reason or reasons for His presence there? Has it made any difference? Oh! Yes! Indeed!

1. Jesus is in heaven now because of **Who He is**, in the glory of His Person. He is God overall, supreme evermore

2. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He is**, His Moral Perfection.
3. Jesus is in heaven now because of **how He lived**. It is the only appropriate terminus of the perfect life that He lived here in this world.
4. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He did** upon the Cross of Calvary at the end of His life here in this world.
5. Jesus is in heaven now because of **what He is doing now**, as God's High Priest above, in heaven.
6. Jesus is in heaven now because of **where we are going**. He is our Forerunner, the guarantee that we, too, shall be there.
7. Jesus is in heaven now because of what He will be in all His glory, in **His future universal supremacy** in His Kingdom, the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Each of these seven points is sufficient in itself. Together, they give us absolute confidence that the Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of the Universe, Saviour of the World, is indeed in heaven at this very moment, awaiting the day when He shall be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That will make a tremendous difference then. Let the assurance of it make a big difference in our lives now.

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