

JANUARY 13, 2019

Have you visited our web site lately? (www.Arthurcoc.com)

(For several Sundays I have been presenting a sermon series on Heaven, attempting to discern from the Scriptures what Heaven will be like. When we are planning a trip to some place where we have never been before, we usually try to find out what sights are to be seen and what will be available for our enjoyment, possibly obtaining vacation folders or videos of the area. Certainly the grandest "trip" we will ever take, as faithful believers in Christ, is Heaven, the eternal abode of the saved. Cartoonists usually depict us sitting on a cloud somewhere, strumming a harp all day. Others have other conceptions of the afterlife, equally unappealing. The following recent article from Steve Higginbotham expresses it well. -Ron)

WILL HEAVEN BE WORSE THAN HELL?

The renowned Science Fiction writer Isaac Asimov once wrote: "I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse."

I think Asimov not only summed up his own thinking about heaven, but he also summed up the thinking of countless others as well. Many people, like Asimov, envision heaven as an eternal worship service wherein the saved will sit on hard wooden pews, wearing uncomfortable neckties, suits and dresses. There we will sit for all eternity, singing every song in the songbook from cover to cover, only to then start it all over again. In a word, many people think heaven will be BORING! While I cannot tell you all the things the saved will do when we get to heaven, I can assure you that it won't be "boring," and we won't prefer hell over heaven! How can I make such an assurance? Because I trust God.

Had I been with the Israelites when they were backed up against the Red Sea, with the Egyptians approaching, I would not have known how God was going to save them, but hindsight revealed He parted the Sea so the Israelites could escape.

Had I been present when God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, I would not have known how God was going to resolve that situation, but hindsight revealed that He provided a ram.

Had I been present when Jesus was murdered on a cross, I would have been so confused, but hindsight revealed the resurrection.

Likewise, while I don't understand how God is going to make heaven the place of eternal joy and happiness, devoid of sorrow, pain and death, I have full faith that someday hindsight will reveal the answer to that question as well.

As for me, I'm homesick for the city which I've never seen. As for Asimov, he has changed his thinking about preferring hell over heaven, but sadly, he changed too late.

"WHAT SHALL BE ON THE MORROW?"

We made it! Unlike many, we have made it through 2018, and have entered into the new year of 2019. We are among the privileged. That we are yet among the living is cause for thanksgiving to the God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28a). Many, both younger and older than we, have since moved on into eternity, but God surely has a purpose on earth for all who remain.

The year of 2018 has become a part of history, and now we are taking our first steps in the year of 2019. There may be particular concerns for this new year. The past year has held its griefs, disappointments and frustrations, as well as its good times and joys. It is sometimes difficult to be optimistic about the future when the past has dealt harshly with us. We are reminded by James that we “know not what shall be on the morrow” (James 4:14a). It is increasingly recognized that we live in a dangerous world. Nations, including our own, face financial woes and even bankruptcies. Questions arise about the soundness of the dollar. Jobs are more plentiful, but circumstances can change quickly. Threats of violence over political issues are on the increase. Freedoms we have taken for granted have been threatened. Terrorists around the globe continue to terrorize. Nations flex their nuclear muscles. In such times, it becomes increasingly difficult to face the future with optimism. What shall be on the morrow? Only God holds the answer to that question. Our responsibility is to step out in **faith**, trusting God to see us through both the good times and the bad. The Christian has the assurance that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is not that all things are, in themselves, good, but that all things, the good and the bad, are made to work out for our fulfilling the purpose for which God has given us life.

What shall be on the morrow? Whatever transpires in this world will not catch God by surprise. Therefore we can face the new year with **hope**. Hope is more than wishing things would get better. It is a combination of both desire and expectation, which grow out of faith in God and the promises of His word. As Jesus enlightened His disciples regarding calamitous events believers would have to face, He gave them hope by saying, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). The redemption we await at Jesus’ return is the “redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23), our resurrection. Our hope is not that fallen man will be capable of forming a utopia on earth through any type of political system. The apostle Peter spoke of those in the last days who would scoff at the Christian doctrine of the return of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-4), but he strengthens our hope by saying, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (v. 13).

With faith and hope to encourage us, we need not be overly stressed by “what shall be on the morrow.” Jesus calls us to be watching and active in our service to Him, lest we be found unprepared at the time of His appearing (Matthew 24:42-51).--Ron

HARMONICA GIFT

“Thanks for the harmonica you gave me for Christmas,” little Johnny said to his uncle. “It’s the best Christmas present I ever got.”

“That’s great,” said his uncle. Do you know how to play it?”

“Oh, I don’t play it,” little Johnny said. “My mom gives me a dollar a day not to play it during the day, and my dad gives me five dollars a week not to play it at night.”
--Cybersalt
Digest

PRAY FOR: Sammie reports that another cancer has been found—in her colon. She will be having a colonoscopy soon. *** Doris and I both had good reports from our doctors this week.*** David Ferguson and Bill Livesay’s transplant surgery has been scheduled for January 29. *** Pray for those in authority in our country that they may

seek wisdom from God in all decisions. *** Remember the many being persecuted for their faith in Christ, especially in Muslim and Communist nations.