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What if heaven wasn't that great?

Many of us have suffered a great deal in our life and need to experience true healing, not just a bandage to cover up our emotional pains. How do we move from this heartache to healing? The answer to that question lies in building a deeper relation with our Creator. Bill Gillham makes an interesting analogy in His book *What God Wishes Every Christian Knew*. (I would highly recommend reading it). He forces us to look at our motivations for believing in and following Christ by imagining a hellish heaven.

Have you ever asked yourself the question whether or not it is Christ you love, or the possibility of getting to heaven? What if heaven was "hellish?" What if heaven consisted of a scarcity of food, dry and hot weather, hard labor, no entertainment, and it was a heavily over populated area? Each day, however, you could work side by side with Jesus. What if you also lived with Jesus and would come home after each long day of work to share an apartment with Him and eight other people, but you could spend those evenings talking with Jesus and He would answer every question you had.

On the other hand, what if hell was "heavenly?" What if it was

beautiful with flowing streams and green palm trees, mountains and pleasant aromas. What if there was no work and you could have any material possession or do anything you wanted? You could have plenty of friends, however, Jesus wasn't there because He was in heaven. Where would you want to go? This is a hard question because it makes us ask ourselves whether we are in love with heaven or Jesus.

Consider it this way. Let's say your spouse was diagnosed with a disease and the doctors said the only way he/she could live was to move out into a secluded desert. Would you tell your spouse, "Go on ahead, I think I will stay here and take care of the house and yard to make sure it doesn't get run down?" You would promise to call him/her every night before bed and before every meal. You would also agree to meet once a week on a hard park bench for one hour to visit. Would this be a desired marriage relationship? Certainly not! You would give up all you had to be with the one you love. Sometimes, however, this is exactly how we treat Christ. Rather than living with Him and building our relationship and knowing Him more, we simply pray before meals and bed, and once a week we meet Him at church for a short time before going home to do our own things. We visit Christ when we should, as Scripture tells us, live with Him. We should love Christ as we love our spouse; desiring to know Him fully. Heaven is not a place as much as it is a marriage relationship. We read in John, "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true--even in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Note that we are IN Christ and that Christ IS eternal life. Therefore, we don't inherit a place of eternal life, we fully inherit the person; Christ Jesus. Believe me, this is no small matter to understand that we are in Christ and can do nothing without Him. Have you lost joy in this life because of something you have done in the past? A relationship with Christ will help your heart to accept what your head already should know. . . Jesus

forgave our sin, forgot it, threw it away and will never let it count against us. In John we read, "If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. . . .I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:6-11). For our joy to be complete we must first recognize the unity we have in Jesus Christ. We are being built into God's temple: "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev 3:12). Yet we also see later in Revelation, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev 21:22). We are being built into a unity in Christ that we can only imagine right now.

What a glorious truth this is. I believe developing a friendship with Christ and a better understanding of His forgiveness is the answer for moving into the steps of healing. However, if one denies our Creator and a young earth everything God just offered us for a joy filled forgiven life is worthless. If you believe in evolutionary philosophies that the earth is old that means that all the dinosaurs lived millions of years before man ever existed. This also means that dinosaurs died before man existed and therefore death is something that is just natural with no meaning or purpose. However, the Bible clearly tells us that death came about by man not vice versa. In Romans we read, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). Even in Genesis 3:14-19 we see that because man sinned death came into the world and all of the universe was cursed. On the other hand, evolution says that death has no meaning and therefore it certainly is not a result of sin and couldn't have come from man because he wasn't around yet. If this is true, than Jesus death can have no joy giving, sin freeing power for your life because then His death has no meaning either. For some reason Christians have a hard time understanding this great truth but

evolutionists see this dilemma clearly. Richard Bozarth, an atheist and an evolutionist says, "Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. Take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins - - and this is what evolution means - - then Christianity is nothing!" Hebrews 9:22 says without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. Without Jesus' bloody death having meaning and purpose He cannot logically be your Creator, Savior, or Joy Giver. One needs to first understand the bad news of man's sin in Genesis before he will understand the good news of God's answer to that sin in the New Testament. Without a literal Genesis I dare say there is no good news.

For those who have experienced great sins in their life they feel a need for forgiveness and renewal. A restoration that cannot take place if the earth is millions of years old. Understanding that God did create the world and send a Savior for us means that we get to go to heaven. However, many people do not realize that Christ offers much more than salvation to Christians. He also wants us to have pure joy and happiness in this earthly life even while going through struggles. The problem is, how do we get that joy? The answer lies in a deeper understanding of our Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ. If our goal is to just get to heaven and not to have a better understanding of the source of that privilege we may not experience the joy we could have on earth. Too often we treat God as a mean landlord that provides a house instead of a loving Father to live with. When you watch a football game on television, who do you discuss it with? When you go to the lake who do you visit with? When you go to the movies, who do you go with? If it isn't your spouse it is usually your friend. We share our deepest darkest secrets with those we love but, we also share the most trivial

circumstances and happenings with these same loved ones. However, when it comes to our relationship with Christ, we only let Him deal with the big things like, sunsets, cancer or mountains. God DESIRES a relationship with you; one where we share EVERYTHING with Him. Yes, that means confessing our sins, but also our trip to Wal-Mart, sweeping the garage or making dinner are all jobs that Christ does with you. This may sound trivial but it is what God desires. God is all in all (1 Cor 15:28). That means He is everything in your church life, everything in your home life, everything in your entertainment and everything else in your life. But He can only be that when He is first accepted as Creator and Savior who conquered death with His own purposeful death and resurrection through the cross.

Do we believe that God did all He said He did in the Bible. After all, according to John 1:1-3 the Bible is, in a strange way, Jesus, the Word of God. If we doubt what He said in Genesis, how can we believe Him when He says pure joy comes from knowing His love and forgiveness? If we doubt the miracles of creation how can we believe Jesus turned water into wine? The bottom line is faith. God wants our heart, not just our minds. He wants us to have more than salvation, He wants us to have joy while we journey on this earth. There will be no joy until we recognize God's infinite power to create and save you in a personal way. If God didn't create the world only a few thousand years ago one may doubt His ability in forgiving such a terrible sin one has done. Where is the healing in that? I used to go through much of my life beating myself because of sins I had done. I would pray, "Please forgive me Lord," but not know if God was answering my prayer. Usually I would later believe He did forgive me but I had to make sure I felt guilty enough for that forgiveness to take place. That was Satan working. Satan does not want you to experience forgiveness and a true joy-filled relationship with Christ. My prayers have changed. I no longer ask God to forgive me of anything. Now I thank Him for forgiving me for everything. See the difference? I claim His

forgiveness rather than question whether I have it and Satan hates that. I confess my sin and thank God that is already forgiven. The very fact that we feel guilty over sins (after forgiveness) suggests that we feel that we have to do something to make that forgiveness complete and that what Christ did wasn't good enough. It suggests we don't really believe God forgave us as He said He does. . . completely casting our sins away as far as the east is from the west. Nothing could be further from the truth.

God tells us that He knew us before He even created the world: "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight" (Eph 1:4). Right from the start God had a plan to conquer death and provide a Savior for you though you were not yet here (Gen 3:15). The Bible also says that when Christ died He forgave all my sins in advance: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins" (Col 2:13). Note the Bible doesn't say He will forgive but that He did forgive. Therefore, as a Christian, every sin was already paid for 2000 years ago. This is why we can boldly thank God for forgiving us rather than asking Him to do so. Because it is already done we only need to accept it. But once again, there is no hope for this restoration if the earth is millions of years old and Jesus' death has no meaning.

Understanding joy all begins with understanding our Creator, the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Friend. This same Creator was destined to be our Savior before the creation of the world and now desires a relationship with you. The more we study the Bible without picking and choosing which parts of Jesus we like and don't like (The Word made flesh) the more our relationship will develop. The more our relationship grows the more joy we will experience here on earth as we accept the pure and complete forgiveness of Jesus Christ, our Creator. Yes Jesus is our Creator as part of the Trinity. John wrote, "Through Him all things were

made; without Him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). To deny Jesus as Creator of a young earth means we cannot be healed by Him either. I for one am thankful that the earth is young and that He has provided a means of renewal, a fresh start no matter what sin you may have finished. Because the earth is only a few thousand years old there is nothing too big or too small for our Creator to forgive. I'm also thankful that life on earth can be heavenly with a relationship with Jesus, but even greater yet will be our heavenly heaven in Him.