

May 26, 2019

“The Layover”, Philippians 1:19-26

Using the Bible as our source to find reliable information about heaven, today we find glimpses of a “Layover”, a midpoint place between our death on this broken earth and our final eternal heavenly home with God. In Philippians 1:19-26, Paul tells fellow believers that being “with Christ...is better by far”, an insight into what awaits us after life as Christians. In II Cor. 5:6-9, Paul shares that he would “rather be absent in the body and at home with the Lord”. Luke tells us that Jesus told the thief beside him on the cross: “today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) Also in Luke 16:19-31, Jesus describes an intermediate state in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Even in the visionary revelation of John, the martyrs under the altar in heaven are watching the injustice on earth and asking God to make things right. (Rev. 6:9-11).

I. The Bible speaks of a “Layover” for believers on our way between earth and heaven.

This intermediate state is between our mortal life on this broken, imperfect earth and our final resurrected life on the renewed earth for eternity with God after Jesus returns. Understanding that we have an intermediate state reconciles a lot of the contradictory thoughts we may have about heaven, e.g.: Is it more physical or ethereal? Is heaven up or here on earth? Is everyone the same or are there jobs and rewards? Answers depend on whether we speak of the intermediate state of temporary layover, or our permanent destination in heaven with God.

II. The Layover is better than our point of departure. Philippians 1:19-26

This intermediate state is not the purgatory of Catholicism, nor the soul sleep of some who believe we cease to exist with a later possibility of resurrection. Paul claims it “better by far” (Phil. 1:23) to be with Christ after death than the broken world where we came from. In fact, Paul had the confidence and hope that whether he lived or died in his imprisonment, it would turn out for his deliverance/salvation (Phil. 1:19). He even makes it sound as if the choice between execution and exoneration is his (Phil. 1:22-24). However, Paul, in reality, seems to be actively trying to discern the will of God and figure out what he should pray for (God’s preference). If God’s choice is that he should die, Paul describes that intermediate heaven as far better than earth where “to die is gain” (Phil. 1: 21). It is better to get more of Christ.

III. The Layover is better but is mysterious.

We are given few details about the Layover, but we do know that:

- A. We will be with Christ. With injustice continuing on earth, we will know justice and peace with Jesus with no more doubt or need for faith because we will be with Him.
- B. We will rest. Here we will find true Sabbath rest (Rev. 14:13) & not unconscious soul sleep.
- C. We will have some awareness of what is happening on earth. (Luke 16:19-31+ Rev. 6:9-11) Although we do not seem to be able to communicate with those on earth, God Himself can and does in many ways.
- D. Similarities between the intermediate state and eternal heaven include: both are called heaven, both are in God’s presence, both are called Paradise by Paul, John, and Jesus. In fact, eternal heaven happens when intermediate heaven....comes to earth. More in sermon on June 9!

Discussion Questions:

1. Is this idea of an intermediary heaven (Layover) new to you? Do these glimpses from the Bible convince you of the reality of a Layover between death and eternity?
2. How could this layover give you clarity, hope, and encouragement?
3. Paul announced that his situation was win/win...”to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21). How would this belief change your daily life, and your end of life thoughts/feelings?
4. Even in prison, Paul sought God’s purpose for his life which he was convinced would produce “fruitful labor” (Phil. 1:22) What would a life of fruitful labor look like for you?
5. Is heaven (both intermediate and eternal) just a philosophy for you, or do you put your hope in it, long for it, and really desire to tell others about it?