Hell, Heaven…and a God of Love. Part 10

John 14:1-6

1. There have been books written about heaven. Some of them are over 300 pages and very certain of themselves. The fact remains that we only get glimpses of what our eternal life with Christ will be.
    a. I remember being disappointed that Revelation's description was symbolic, metaphoric. I was looking forward to seeing a road made of gold and a gate carved out of a single pearl. (Revelation 21:18-21)
    b. There is no bait and switch here: we just don't have the words or the brains to process what life with God will look like. See Ezekiel 1 and count the times he has to say "like" or "as."
    c. Paul wrote of his near death experience, perhaps after having been stoned and left for dead (Acts14:19 in Lystra). He said he saw things that it was not lawful for him to describe (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).
    d. When Daniel saw behind the curtain of our existence, the man who did not shy away from kings or lions dropped down like a dead man at the feet of the angel.

2. There is an amazing worship scene in Revelation 5 where we see the King of Kings, the Master of History, the Lord of All Time step up to open the scroll that no one else in heaven or earth could open. When we see him, he looks like a slaughtered lamb, not a mighty conqueror. The worship that follows is mind blowing. (Revelation 5:8-14).
    a. Some have taken this to mean that we will spend eternity worshiping around the throne of God. But is heaven an eternal worship service?
    b. Something is happening in this kingdom for its gates never shut (Revelation 21:24).

3. Jesus will hand his kingdom, his crown, to the Father and walk among us as our brother. (1st Corinthians 15:24-26). Then, Jesus, who told us that those were faithful over few things would be rulers over many will go to work with us on our next assignment.

4. The entire theme of redeeming this earth, this universe, and us is "resurrection." Jesus declares himself "the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25) And he did so standing by the grave of his friend, Lazarus, while speaking to Martha, Lazarus's sister and Jesus's dear friend. (review the chapter and the story)

5. Jesus comes as a Bridegroom – a MUCH bigger deal in that day than in ours. The city descends – a new heaven AND a new earth – and then comes the hero. (Revelation 19:6-16)

6. So…what happens when we die? The Bible doesn't give us a step by step, play by play description. We can only piece together what we can. We know that Jesus told a parable about Lazarus and the rich man where Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (a sweet and comforting picture, to be sure!). But this was a parable. What do we KNOW?

7. We know that God is love and He has promised us salvation and great joy. We can trust Him on that. Some believe the Bible teaches that those who die sleep until resurrection day but that seems to contradict too many passages for me to accept. Others believe that we remain just spirits until we will all be resurrected at the same time, living and dead, changed in the twinkling of an eye. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

8. Yet, in many ways, those who have passed on already have been resurrected. Colossians 1:13 says they have been translated into the kingdom. (vv.10-14) We see them before the throne of God in Revelation. We see them around Jesus at the Transfiguration…and we recognize those we have never seen.

9. One day, we will enter. There will be no closed gates. One day, we shut our eyes for the last time and open them to see open gates and the angels guarding the gates motioning us to enter. As we enter, we hear cheering from the assembled multitudes of those gone before. In circles around the throne we see Mary, Paul, Elijah, Noah, Dorcas, Deborah…all of them. We see our loved ones.

10. We feel the love of God pulling us toward the light in the center of the circles. Above, we see flaming seraphim and singing cherubim.

We see the 24 elders, the beasts, the friends of God and the sons of God. And in the middle of the circle, as we draw near, we see Jesus but he is not seated on his throne. No, the Bible shows us at the death of Stephen and when approached by the martyrs, Jesus stands in honor of our lives, welcoming us home.

11. What happens next? Whatever it is, it is all good. We have no words for it and our brains cannot process it now but it is beyond any dreams or imaginations we might have at the moment. For He is Good and He is God and He has promised. FAITH is all about trusting Him.

12. The reward will be worth the journey. So walk on.