

## Psalm 123

The quality of our Christian life depends on our focus. Are we engrossed in the headlines and our daily activities; or are we focused on something higher than all of this?

### Heaven

**Read Psalm 123:1** The psalmist is looking to God for help and direction. He tells us that God lives in the heavens (plural). Where is heaven?

Paul speaks of a man who died and went to heaven and was brought back to life. He spoke about going to the **third heaven**, where God lives.

*I knew a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows) such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)*

The Hebrews referred to there being three heavens. The first heaven is the sky, filled with birds and clouds. The second heaven is the universe and the constellations of stars. The third heaven is God's place of dwelling.

The word used in this psalm is the plural form of the word for heaven (H8064); including the clouds and the stars.

The third heaven is where God's throne is. Even though God exists in the third heaven he is too big for heaven to contain.

*“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! (1 Kings 8:27)*

We can see Jesus in the scriptures in one physical location; and yet God is still omnipresent (in all places).

*If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. (Psalm 139:8)*

Generally speaking, people cannot die and come back from the dead. All of the stories that we hear about near-death of experiences and reports of heaven need to be weighed in the light of scripture.

*...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27)*

If we could take a tour of the third heaven what might we see? We might compare it to an electrical storm; filled with loud thunder and bright lightning.

*Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there was lightning, noises, thundering, an earthquake, and great hail. (Revelation 11:19)*

In reality it is not inclement weather at all. When the seraphim or cherubim angels speak, their voice is booming and shakes the surrounds like standing in front of Niagra Falls.

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isaiah 6:1-4)*

*Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." (Revelation 6:1)*

The appearance of lightning is probably coming from the cherubim angels; who surround the throne of God.

*Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. And each one went straight*

*forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.*  
(Ezekiel 1:4-14)

Our physical body could not visit heaven, that is why the prophets had to do so in visions or in their spirit.

*So the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.” And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.” Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” And the LORD said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” (Exodus 33:17-23)*

We need a better body to not be blinded by the brighter colors and pure light. We need new ears to not be deafened by God’s voice. We need new hearts and minds so that we do not ruin heaven like Adam and Eve ruined the Garden of Eden.

*...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body (Philippians 3:21)*

*“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:3-4)*

*But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of*

*the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-44)*

### **How Much Should We Expect from God?**

**Read Psalm 123:2** Some people feel that there is some kind of virtue in not *bothering God* with our *small requests*. God wants to go over everything with us. Whatever we do alone is more likely to fail. Christians often fail in the areas of their strengths and in areas of high confidence.

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

How do we pray? Is it a *long shot wish list*? Some level of faith is required to expect a positive outcome. It is impossible to please God in anything that does not involve some level of faith.

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)*

Praying can almost be a fearful obligation. It is healthy and encouraging to see your prayers answered.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8)*

Part of having a better prayer life is to literally expect God to do something about it. That might be one reason that some faith giants in the bible had so many things to pray about. They needed to see God deliver them over and over to take greater steps of faith.

*..strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. (Colossians 1:11-12)*

God answers prayers in a very subtle and covert way. In fact, many times you could chalk up the good fortune to *circumstances*, if you are not paying close attention. We sleep walk past our blessings all day long.

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter (Proverbs 25:2)*

That is one reason that having a prayer diary is helpful. We spend so much energy worrying about things to come; and then we immediately dismiss answered prayers as if they never came to pass.

### **The Abundant Life**

Prayer is actually to build our relationship with God, more than it is a means to receive what is needed. There is a better way of living that God wants us to tap into. The scriptures describe something called the abundant life. The abundant life is to live above the fray of our *daily dramas*. The abundant life is not driven by the ups and downs of daily life to the degree that we have known. There is an overriding joy that goes with it. In fact, God allows compliant believers to still experience boredom and anxiety in our faith to show us that Christian living is intended for more than becoming forgiven and getting what we need. That is just the beginning of a far better way to live.

*and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)*

*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10b)*

*You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)*

The deeper we go with God, the better our life gets. We have to go beyond our *to-do list relationship* with God. That is more *crisis and concern* oriented than relationship oriented.

Unbelievers only have this world to look forward to. Believers have less concern about the here and now; because their future is with God. We also know that God is orchestrating things to bless us. Getting closer to God increases our awareness of what is happening around us.

*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.* (John 15:14-15)

The psalms have showed us how a believer will come to God with a concern and return in peace and blessing. In that respect, our worldly concerns force us to get blessed. As we concentrate on this world, we become vexed and pulled down. As we focus on God, we can relax and let him drive and thrive.

### Foot Washing

**Read Psalm 123:3-4:** Christians are like Velcro. They pick up whatever we rub against. That daily accumulation of worldly attitudes and fears needs to be periodically washed off. There are two types of repentance. One is to turn from our sins and to be saved (one-time thing). The second is to get back on track with God as we get way off of the mark. That daily repentance can be referred to as *foot washing*.

Jesus had some things to say about foot washing. It was not so much about hygiene. It was more about dealing with how dirty things stick to us as we walk through this world. We are saved, but we still need to wash off the daily build up that we bring home with us. In other words, Christians are forgiven; but they need to repent and wash off all of the negative things that we pick up. It is part of being holy.

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, (John 13:3-10)*

In this case the psalmist is experiencing envy and malice as he sees the evil men live in success and abundance. He is angry about this injustice. He does not see what the future holds for them.

Part of the abundant life is being able to relax because God is driving. He will properly deal with the evil and he will protect his sheep.

*But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another. (Psalm 75:7)*

*For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." (Hebrews 10:30)*

*For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)*

*"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. (Jeremiah 17:10)*