



Heaven Is Better Than Ice Cream

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“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. Malachi 4:1-2

Tears ran down Jeremy’s red, messy face as he slammed the back door and ran across the yard. There was a little hiding spot between the shed and the fence, and he squeezed inside, curling up tight and hugging his knees. Jeremy was scared. His dad had asked him to clean up the living room before Grandma and Grandpa came over, but Jeremy didn’t want to. When his dad asked again, Jeremy exploded. He shouted that he was sick of doing chores and even called his dad mean names he knew he shouldn’t have said.

Now, sitting behind the shed, Jeremy felt awful. His stomach hurt—not from food, but from guilt. He knew he had done wrong. He knew he should have listened and obeyed. And he knew he deserved to be punished.

While Jeremy was thinking about how long he’d probably be grounded—no video games, no dessert—he heard footsteps crunching on the grass. His dad peeked into the small space and sat down next to him.

Jeremy turned his tear-streaked face toward his dad. “I’m sorry, Dad,” he whispered. He braced himself, waiting to hear the punishment. But instead, his dad wrapped him in a big, strong hug. “I forgive you,” his dad said softly. “I already cleaned the living room for you. Now come inside—your grandparents are here, and we have ice cream.”

Wow. Jeremy deserved punishment, but he got love instead.

That’s just like what God does for us! We do bad things too—we disobey, we say mean words, and we don’t always love others the way God wants us to. We deserve punishment for our sins—yes, even to be separated from God forever. Malachi described it as a day that sets us on fire. How awful!

But, instead of punishing us, God forgives us. “The sun of righteousness will shine with healing in its rays.” Jesus took our punishment when he died on the cross. Because of him, God hugs us instead of punishing us. He gives us forgiveness, love, and forever life in heaven—which is way better than ice cream!

Questions to Consider:

What do we get from God instead of punishment? (Hint: Romans 6:23)

What are some of your favorite things—ice cream flavors, games, or places? Why is heaven even better than all of those?

Have you ever committed a sin too big for God to forgive? (Hint: 1 John 1:9)

How does knowing God forgives you make you feel?

If God forgives our sins and promises us heaven, why do we still sometimes get punished here on Earth?

Since God forgives us, how does he want us to treat people who hurt or upset us? (Hint: Ephesians 4:32)