

# HEAVEN

For several months, I have researched and even talked to some fellow believers about Heaven. My findings will astonish you. I have discovered that the vast majority of believers, at least the ones I talked to, have a drastic and a very unhealthy view of Heaven. With such a misconception about Heaven, I understand in its totality why so many believers avoid the subject of Heaven.

It is my belief that Christians do not talk about Heaven enough; perhaps, it is because we are afraid of death. Or perhaps, it is because we love this world so much that we do not want to leave it. Regardless of the reason, I submit to you that Heaven should always be on the mind of every believer, after all, according to the apostle Paul, our citizenship is in Heaven (“But our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. “(Php 3:20).

Well, God has placed it upon my heart to teach a series on Heaven. It is my prayer, that as a result of Going through this series, you will see Heaven as God intended for us to view it. You will now be armed with great biblical truths about Heaven, and for some of you, this information will be confirmation to what you already know. But nevertheless, upon completion we will have Heaven on our minds at all times.

No, we will not be suicidal and I am not going to implore you to “drink the kool-aid”. But, we will spring forth with joy in our hearts telling everyone about this Heaven. We will lift our voices singing, “*When we all get to Heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be, when we all see Jesus we will sing and shout the victory.*” We won’t stop there, we will teach our families, neighbors and co-worker about Heaven. We are going to be so excited about Heaven that we will go out and share the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone, because we will want them to go to Heaven with us. So, before we get started, let’s see how much you really know about HEAVEN!

**THIS IS NOT A QUIZ!** These questions are asked for you to gauge yourself on your knowledge of Heaven compared to the extensive and biblical research done for this bible study. Relax, and I pray that you are enlightened and learn about the believers future home.

1. What are you looking forward to in your study of Heaven?
2. Read Acts 17:11. What does this passage say, and how does it relate to how we should view claims about the afterlife based on near-death experience and personal speculation?
3. Consider 1Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything. Hold on to the good.” How should this principle be applied to reading any book other than the Bible?
4. “The sense that we will live forever, somewhere, has shaped every civilization in human history....Anthropological evidence suggest that every culture has a God-given, innate sense of the eternal---that this world is not all there is” (Heaven,xix). Do you think this statement is significant or revealing? In what way?
5. Read Psalm 39:4-5 How are these verses important as we consider the subject of Heaven?
6. Ancient merchants often wrote the words memento mori---“think of death”---in large letters on the first page of their accounting books. What perspective did this bring to their daily lives? Is anticipating death unhealthy, or can it be healthy?
7. What do you remember learning about Heaven as you were growing up? Who or what were your sources of information?
8. What God made us to desire....is exactly what he promises to those who follow Jesus Christ: a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth” (Heaven, 7). How does this concept of Heaven compare with yours?
9. Discuss how Heaven has “fallen off our radar screens” as a culture. Why don’t we think more about it?
10. Read John 8:44 and Revelation13:6 in the NIV. What role does Satan play in keeping us from anticipating Heaven?

## PART 2

### **WHERE DO PEOPLE GO WHEN THEY DIE?**

Unbelievers, (those who die without accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) go to Hell. Scriptures: Lk 16:19-23; Mt 25:31-46; Rev 20: 12-15

Believers (those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) go to Heaven . Scriptures: Lk 19-22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:8; Phil1:21,23

**My Comments:** Earth is an “in-between” world touched by both Heaven and Hell. It will lead to one or the other. The split second you die, depending solely on your relationship with Jesus, you are either ushered to Heaven by an angel, or you wake up in Hell . My momma use to tell me, “John Leslie, there are only two places, Heaven and Hell, and you can’t miss them both.”

### **DO WE REMAIN CONSCIOUS AFTER DEATH?**

Jesus Christ depicted Lazarus and the rich man as conscious in Heaven and in Hell immediately after they died (Lk16:22-31). Jesus also told the dying thief on the cross that “Today you will be with me in paradise (LK 23:43). The apostle Paul said to die was to be with Christ (Phil1:23) and to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor5:8). In Revelations 6:9-11, martyrs are in Heaven talking to God to bring justice on earth.

**My Comments:** Yes, you will be very conscious after you die and not only will you be conscious, but you will be very aware of your surroundings. The term “soul sleep” is very much misunderstood. Some people think it means when you die, you are in a deep sleep. unaware of anything and awaiting the return of the Lord to get up from your sleep. In 1<sup>st</sup> Thes 4:13; the apostle Paul was talking about your bodies being in the ground until Jesus comes back, not your souls. The physical body sleeps and the soul goes to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **WHEN WE DIE, WILL WE BE JUDGED?**

Yes, we will! But please, do not get this mixed up with the final judgment; theologians call it the “Judgment of Faith.” This initial judgment does not depend on your works, but on your faith. (Eph2:8-9; Titus 3:5) If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you go to Heaven. If you do not, you go to Hell.

The final judgment, or what is sometimes called “The Judgment of Works,” is just like the initial judgment because both believers and unbelievers will be judged. At the final judgment, believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of their life (Ro 14; 10-12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:10). This judgment is of the believers works, not faith (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 3:13-14). Although our works do not affect our salvation, they do affect our rewards, which are conditional and dependent on our faithfulness (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26; 3:21). Unbelievers will also face a final judgment called “The Great White Throne” (Rev 20:11-12).

## **WILL WE LIVE IN HEAVEN FOREVER?**

When someone dies, we say, (they are in Heaven with God.) That is true, but, we're referring to what theologians call "the Intermediate Heaven". Intermediate Heaven is a transitional period between our past lives on earth and our future resurrection to life on the new earth. (Revelations 21). Although the Intermediate Heaven is a wonderful place, it is not our final destination. You must remember that in the beginning, Heaven was created. (Gen1:1)

## **SO WHAT IS THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN LIKE?**

We will be in the presence of God, but we will be awaiting the time of Christ's return to the earth.

By definition, the Intermediate Heaven is:

- . an Intermediate state or location
- . temporary
- . the place where believers go when they die
- . far better than earth
- . where we will dwell prior to the bodily resurrection (Phil 1:23)
- . in the angelic realm, whereas, the future permanent Heaven will be in the human realm, which will be on earth. The dwelling place of God will be the dwelling place of humanity (Rev 21:1-3).

## **PART 3**

### **IS THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN A PHYSICAL PLACE?**

Some people believe Heaven is not a physical place; it is a spiritual place. When people die, their souls go to Heaven to be with the Lord. God does have a body, so their thinking is that when we die we don't have bodies until the resurrection. But I see it like this, if the Intermediate Heaven is a place where God, angels and humans dwell, it makes sense that Heaven would be accommodated to mankind, because GOD needs no accommodation. According to the Bible, the elders have faces, martyrs wear clothes and people have palm branches in their hands (Rev 7:9) also according to the bible, there will be musical instruments in the Intermediate Heaven (Rev8:6), horses coming in and out of Heaven (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2:11; Rev 19:14) and an eagle flying overhead in Heaven (Rev 8:13). Now, many commentators say that these are symbolic; but, I say it may be true with some of them, not all of them.

**My Comments: Often our thinking is backwards, we think, or wonder, if Heaven is like earth. I say it's the other way around, earth is like Heaven. We tend to start with earth and go up to Heaven. It is my belief that earth is patterned after Heaven. I believe that Heaven is where we get our community and cultural ideas from. After all, God refers to himself as a father and we are His children. I believe God created father-child relationships to display His relationship with us. So, I believe that the Intermediate Heaven is a physical place. Jesus told the thief on the cross "Today you will be with Me in paradise." (Lk23:43). The word paradise comes from the Persian word *pairidaeza*, meaning "a walled park or enclosed garden". In Judaism, in the New Testament era paradise was not generally understood as a mere allegory with a metaphorical of spiritual meaning, but as an actual**

**physical place where God and his people lived together, surrounded by physical beauty, enjoying great pleasures and happiness.(Rev 2:7)**

### **WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN?**

In Rev 6:9-11, John tells us what he witnessed happening in Heaven and from John's account; we can conclude several observations about the Intermediate Heaven.

- When you get to Heaven you will be the same person you were on earth (vs9). The martyrs' were.
- You will have a voice (vs 10). "They called out with a loud voice"
- You will be free to ask God questions (vs 10). "How long, Sovereign Lord?"
- God will answer your questions (vs 11).
- Time will still exist; "How long (vs 10) and replies "wait". This tells us that time will still exist.

**My Comments: These three verses gives us some insight, unless the realities of these passages apply only to this one group of martyrs and no one else in Heaven, I am inclined to believe it is not only for them, but it applies to everyone in Heaven.**

### **DO PEOPLE HAVE INTERMEDIATE BODIES IN THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN?**

We do not receive resurrection bodies immediately after death. We receive them at the resurrection. So, the question becomes, are we floating in space or do we get bodies? The apostle Paul tends to believe we will have bodies (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:2-4). The martyrs in Heaven are described as wearing robes (Rev 6:9-11). The apostle John seems to have had a body. He said he touched and held things; and he ate and tasted things there (Rev 10:9-10). When Moses and Elijah appeared at the transfiguration, it appears they were in their Intermediate bodies (Lk 9:28-36). Jesus ascribes physical bodies to people who die when He told the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31).

**My comments: Some commentators will say the story of the rich man and Lazarus is nothing more than a parable and not intended to teach us about Heaven. I tend to disagree; notice that the story of Lazarus is the only parable in which Jesus used a specific name. Perhaps, He was telling a story of a real man named Lazarus ??? You will also recognize the following in the parable:**

- **The Intermediate Heaven and Hell are separated by a fixed chasm.**
- **The rich man and Lazarus are depicted as having physical bodies.**
- **The rich man had a tongue and a thirst.**
- **Lazarus had a finger and water was available to him.**
- **The rich man remembers his lost brothers.**

**Surely some of these things in the story are figurative, but all of them certainly are not. I believe we will have bodies, but they are only temporal just like the Intermediate Heaven. In this case, I must quote the words of the apostle Paul when he was taken up to Heaven, "Whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, but God knows. (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 12:3).**

## **PART 4**

### **DO THE PEOPLE IN INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN REMEMBER LIFE ON EARTH?**

The people in the Intermediate Heaven do know what's happening on earth. The martyrs knew that they had been killed and that the people who killed them had not been judged (Rev 6:10). They also clearly remembered their lives on earth. Also, in LK 16:22-26, Abraham reminded the rich man of what he had during his life; and the rich man also knew he had brothers who were not saved (LK 16:27-28).

**My comments:** For some reason, people tend to believe that when we get to Heaven, we will forget everything. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only will we remember everything, we will know each other. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man knew Lazarus from earth and he knew he was in Heaven. At the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter knew that the two men with Jesus were Elijah and Moses (Mt 17:1-4). Heaven would not be worth going if we didn't remember what we went through and if we didn't know each other when we got there. I am looking forward to spending eternity with Teri, Ruby Jean and my fellow Macedonians and I can't wait to reunite with Mac Charles Jones and all of the Macedonians who have gone to Heaven. But, I am on tip toe anticipation awaiting to meet Martin Luther King Jr, Medger Evers, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, the apostle Peter and John the Baptist ... just to name a few. Won't it be grand yaw, wont it be grand!!!

### **DO PEOPLE IN THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING DOWN ON EARTH?**

If the martyrs in Heaven know that God hasn't yet brought judgment on their persecutors (Rev 6:9-11), it seems to reason that they can see what is happening on earth; at least to some degree it would appear that way. Also, in (Rev 18:20), the angels are addressing people living in Heaven which indicates that they are aware of what is happening on earth. But one of the most compelling scriptures is (Rev 19:1-6). In this passage, a multitude consists of believers who have died and gone to Heaven.

**My comments:** I used to think that people in Heaven were not aware of, and could care less about what is happening on earth. My thought was that they were with Jesus and nothing else mattered. But I am now convinced that I was wrong. There is a scripture (LK 15:7) that is so misunderstood, but upon further examination, it shouts to us that people in Heaven are aware of what happens on earth. It is often understood that the angels in Heaven rejoice when a soul is saved. But if you examine the passage, it says that there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents ... this passage doesn't tell us who is rejoicing, it only states that in Heaven there is rejoicing over a sinner that repents. But if you read further, Luke 15:10 goes on to say that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents. It doesn't say that the rejoicing is done by angels, but in the presence of angels. I submit to you that the people who are doing the rejoicing are our loved ones who have gone on to Heaven. Perhaps, they are rejoicing because finally their son, daughter, friend and etc., got saved and will be coming to join them! Just perhaps!!!!!! And, for those who may think that people in Heaven don't know, because if they knew, it would make them sad or cause them to worry. I say to you my dear friend, you must remember, happiness in Heaven is not based on ignorance, but on perspective. This means, people in Heaven are not happy because they are not aware of what is happening on earth. But, their happiness is based on the fact that they now see things differently; they are now with the Lord Himself. Their happiness is now predicated on where they are and who they are with.

## WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO HAVE VISITED HEAVEN?

**My comments:** Unfortunately, there have been several dozen books written about visits to Heaven by people claiming to have talked with Jesus, met with the apostle Peter, talked to their mother and some even claim to have been shown their mansion. There are many problems with these books and testimonies. All of the books and stories I have heard contain serious and explicit biblical and theological errors. I am only going to address two, of what I consider, the main problems with testimonies of having visited Heaven.

**PROBLEM#1:** The people who claim to have visited Heaven and then come back to report what they saw, are placing themselves in a very select company. According to the Bible, God only allowed one Old Testament prophet, Isaiah (6:1-8) and two first century apostles, Paul and John, this great privilege. Isaiah recorded his experience very briefly and only to tell about his divine call to ministry and the apostle Paul was not permitted by God to describe his experience (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 12:4). My question is this, why would God forbid Paul from telling us about what he saw and yet, let others not only tell about their visit, but sell books and make money by telling of their visit? And you also have to remember that Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him from becoming conceited (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 12:7). Yet, these people seem to be doing just fine! The only affliction they have is from the United States Government charging them high taxes from the money they make from selling their books. You must remember Paul was afflicted with a very serious physical problem.

**PROBLEM #2:** The Bible strongly warns us not to go beyond the revelation God has given us about Heaven or other biblical truths (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 4:6). Also remember, after John received his vision of Heaven, he ended with these words, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev 22:18-19). So those who add their story about Heaven, woe to you. God has given us everything; He wants us to know about Heaven. Let’s just stick with the Bible!

## PART 5

### ARE THERE REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

The Bible is clear that God is not only a Judge, but also a rewarder. (Ps 58:11; 62:12, Pr 11:18; 40:10; 62:11. Mt 5:12; 6:1-2 LK 6:35; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 3:8, 14; Eph 6:8; Heb 10:35-36; 11:6,24-26; 2<sup>nd</sup> Jn 1:8; Rev 2:23; 11:18; 22:12. just to name a few.

The rewarding of Church-age believers (those who have trusted in Jesus Christ between the day of Pentecost and the Rapture) will occur at what the Bible calls “The Judgment Seat of Christ” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:10). I believe this judgment will occur in Heaven immediately after the Rapture (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 4:5). Every believer will appear before the (bema) seat of Christ for the purpose of reviewing our lives, service, thoughts, words and motives after we became believers. I have listed below the main areas in our lives that I believe will be reviewed when we stand before God:

- 1) How we treated other believers (Heb 6:10; Mt 10:41-42).
- 2) How we used our God-given talents and spirituals gifts (Mt 25:14-29; LK 19: 11-26; 1 Cor 12:4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 1:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet 4:10).
- 3) How we used our money (Mt 6: 1-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim 6:17-19).
- 4) How we responded to mistreatment and injustice (Mt 5:11-12; Mk 10:20-30; Lk 6:27-28, 35; Rm 8:18; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 4:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet 4: 12-13).
- 5) How we endured suffering and trials (Jam 1:12; Rev 2:10).

- 6) How we spent our time (Ps 90:9-12; Eph 5:15-16).
- 7) How we ran the race God has given us (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:24; Phi 2:16; 3:13-14 Heb 12:1).
- 8) How effectively we controlled our fleshly appetites (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:25-27).
- 9) How many souls we witnessed to and won for Christ (Pr 11:30; 1<sup>st</sup> Thes 2:19-20).
- 10) How faithful you were to God's word and God people (Acts 20: 26-28; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 4:1-2; Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1 1<sup>st</sup> Pet 5:1-2 2<sup>nd</sup> Jn 1:7-8)
- 11) How hospitable you were to strangers (Mt 25:35-36; LK 14:12-14).
- 12) How faithful you were on your job/vocation (Col 3:22-24).
- 13) How you used your tongue (Mt 12:36; Jam 3:1-12).

## WHAT KIND OF REWARDS WILL GOD GIVE US?

The New Testament focuses specifically on five particular crowns or rewards that the faithful will receive at the judgment seat of Christ (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:10). These crowns are representative of the kinds of conduct and service that will be rewarded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Incorruptible Crown** (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:24-27). This reward is for those who consistently practiced self-discipline and self-control over their physical appetites.

**The Crown of Righteousness** (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 4:8). This reward is for those who eagerly look for the Lord's coming and live a righteous life in view of this fact.

**The Crown of Life** (James 1:2; Rev 2:10). This reward is for those who faithfully endured and persevered under trials and test of life. I call it "The Sufferer's Crown."

**The Crown of Rejoicing** (1<sup>st</sup> Thess 2:19). This reward is for those who won souls to Christ. I call it "The Soul Winner's Crown" " it is given for leading people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Crown of Glory** (1<sup>st</sup> Pet 5:1-4) I call it "The Shepherd Crown", it will be given to those pastors who lovingly, faithfully, diligently and graciously Shepherd and oversee God's people.

*p.s. I want one of these, so please don't make my job no harder than it already is, work with me people, work with me !!!!!*

**My Comments:** So the question that you may be asking is what we will do with these crowns? Will we wear them around Heaven? Will we compare them to the number of crowns others have received? Will we keep them like we do trophies and display them in our homes in Heaven for all to see? I am afraid not, the bible makes it crystal clear that after we receive the rewards, we will immediately give all glory and honor for the rewards back to the Lord. After receiving these rewards in Heaven, at the judgment seat of Christ, we will fall down and worship the Lord and lay our crowns at His feet in front of His throne, and sing the praises of His worth and honor. *"Hallelujah, salvation and glory, honor and power unto the Lord our God; for the Lord our God is mighty, yes the Lord our God is omnipotent, the Lord our God He is wonderful!"* (Rev 4:10-11). By placing them at our great Redeemer's feet in humble gratitude, we are saying that the only one who is worthy of glory, power and honor is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

AMEN

## WILL EVERY BELIEVER RECEIVE A REWARD IN HEAVEN?

I have often heard people say many believers will walk away from the judgment seat of Christ empty-handed. Even some bible teachers insist that a believer can live his or her entire life and have nothing at the end that is truly rewarded by God. The passage they use to support their position is 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 3:13-15.

**My comments:** I tend not to agree with their position. I believe the context of 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 3:13-15 makes it clear that Paul is referring to the local church at Corinth, which he helped found. These verses focus on church leaders at Corinth and building the church there on the foundation Paul left behind. It means that those who are in leadership in churches, or those who are building a ministry, must be extremely careful of what kind of materials they use to build the church or ministry. They must be careful not to follow every new trend and method that arises in the Christian community, because, if they try to use these new trends and methods to build the church/ministry, they will lose their reward for that area of life. This passage doesn't say that they will get no reward for anything in their entire life, but in context, it refers to their work in Heaven, (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 4-5). The Phrase "each man's praise will come to him from God," seems to indicate that each believer who appears before Christ, at His judgment seat, will have something that the Lord can praise, (some word, action of deed etc...) I believe that this is yet another demonstration of God's amazing grace.

## **PART 6**

### **WHAT ARE SOME OTHER NAMES FOR HEAVEN?**

Throughout the bible, Heaven has been referred to by using many names. I have listed, what I believe, are the more common biblical terms or names that are used in the bible.

- 1) My Father's House (Jn 14:2).
- 2) The City of the Living God (Heb 12:22).
- 3) Mount Zion (Heb 12:22).
- 4) The Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22).
- 5) Paradise (LK 23:43; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7).
- 6) The Third Heaven (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 12:2).
- 7) A Better Country (Heb 11:16).
- 8) A Heavenly Homeland (Heb 11:16).
- 9) A Heavenly City (Heb 11:16).
- 10) The Holy City (Rev 21:2).

### **DO PEOPLE IN HEAVEN PRAY FOR THOSE ON EARTH?**

**My comments:** The bible is very clear that Jesus is in Heaven, at the right hand of God, interceding for people on earth (Rom 8:34). So we know for a fact, there is at least one person in Heaven praying for us. Now, you have to understand what prayer is. Prayer is talking to God, which may consist of petitioning, confession, thanksgiving and intercession. So the question becomes, are the people in Heaven talking to God about? Well, according to Rev 6:10, we know that the martyrs are praying to God concerning what's happening on earth. Like the martyrs, I believe that our loved ones have a concern for us; so it is my belief that the saints in Heaven do talk to God about us; at least some of the time. Revelations 5:8 speaks of the "Prayer of the Saints" in a context that may include saints in Heaven; not just the saints on earth. We are never told to pray to the saints. We are to pray only to God. Perhaps, the saints may well be in Heaven talking (praying) to God about us.

### **DO PEOPLE BECOME ANGELS IN HEAVEN?**

Angels are created beings. They were present at the creation of the world and were so filled with wonder and gladness that they "shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). It is evident that they can manifest themselves in human form, and at times, were mistaken for men. Interestingly, they never appear in female form. Some angels have wings

like Isaiah described in Isaiah 6:2 and also stated in Rev 4:8. Angels and humans are similar in several ways: both are servants of God and both have personality (minds, will and emotions.) Yet, while these similarities exist, the Bible is clear that angels are angels and humans are humans. They differ in these ways:

- . Humans have spirits and they were created.
- . Angels were created but they don't have spirits.
- . Angels can assume human appearances and do human functions such as eating and Drinking (Gen 18:1-8).
- . Humans cannot become angels.

**My comments:** The Bible makes it clear that one day, redeemed humans beings will actually judge the angels (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 6:2). In this present life, we are a little lower than the angels; but in the life to come, we will be over them (Psalm 8:5; Heb 2:7). This clearly points out that there is a difference and that we will not become angels when we go to Heaven. So, if you are hoping to become an angel in Heaven, I'm sorry to disappoint you. But, you shouldn't be disappointed at all because our place in Heaven will be above the angels. We are the Bride of Christ. We have a song that the angels cannot sing, *"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified one and I've been redeemed."* "For all eternity we will be with our redeemer! What a destiny that awaits us!

## PART 7

### WILL THERE BE MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN?

**My comments:** Some people, (Kenny Gray) who have experienced a beautiful relationship with their spouse, that they love and cherish, often want to know if that relationship will continue when they get to Heaven. For so many people, (Kenny Gray) it's hard to imagine life without that special relationship to their spouse; therefore, they try to make the Bible say that there will be marriage in Heaven (Kenny Gray). But, the Bible is very clear (Kenny Gray) that there will be no marriage in Heaven. Jesus clearly stated that marriage, as we know it here on earth, will not carry over to Heaven. "For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in Heaven (Mt 22:23-33). Two other New Testament passages, Roman 7:1-3 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:39 also state that marriage, as a physical union, is terminated at death of either spouse. At every wedding I have officiated, I end the vows with the statement, "till death do you part," which is another indicator that death ends marriage. But, this in no way means that married couples will not share a close relationship. Their relationship will improve tremendously; they both will be the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will now enjoy a relationship that only God could make possible. So if you think you have a great relationship with your spouse now, just wait until you get to Heaven. I know that it is hard to imagine because it means no sex. In Heaven, there will be something far greater to enjoy than sexual intercourse. Men and women will enjoy each other in a much deeper way than that which can be accomplished by physical sex.

### WHAT WILL WE DO IN HEAVEN?

**My comments:** Some questions asked quite frequently are, when I get to Heaven what will I do all day? What are they doing in Heaven now? Some people seem to view Heaven as a place of inactivity and endless boredom. Bo Williams wrote a song entitled, *"walk around Heaven all day,"* I will be honest; I often wonder if I will be allowed to play football in Heaven? I know Alex Marshall wishes there will be golf there. But before I address the question, what will we do in Heaven; I believe it is important to let you know what we

won't do in Heaven. We will never sin, never make mistakes, never need to confess, never get into an argument, never have to lock our doors, never have to worry, never be discriminated against, never have to deal with Satan, no more loneliness, depression or fatigue, just to name a few. Now with all that said, life for us will have improved tremendously. However, that still doesn't answer the question "what will we be doing in Heaven"? While the Bible doesn't tell us as much as we would like to know about what we will do in Heaven, it does focus on at least six primary activities that do take place in Heaven. It is my belief that the following six things provide us with a general overview of what we will be doing in Heaven, or should I say, what they are doing in Heaven right now.

1) *Singing and Praising God* (Rev 4:10-11; 7:7-12; 11:15-17; 14:3 15:2-4; 15:2-4; 19:4-6). Heaven is a place of uninhibited joy and spontaneous, unending worship. Even folk like me, who can't carry a tune here on earth, will be able to sing rapturously in Heaven. Now you must know this, we will not be singing "Pass me not" or "Some Glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away, or "When we all get to Heaven." In Heaven, we will be singing praises to our Redeemer, who sits on the throne. We will be thanking Him and singing about how great and glorious He is.

2) *Serving* (Rev 1:6; 7:15; 19:5; 22:3)

The Bible says clearly that we will serve the Lord forever, but, it never tells us specifically how we will serve. All we know for certain is that we will serve forever in God's presence. If you think that serving God down here on earth is a privilege, then imagine how wonderful it is going to be in Heaven.

3) *Supervising* (Mt 25:21; LK 19:17-19; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim 2:12; Rev 3:20-21; 20:4; 22:5). God's people will reign forever with the Lord as servant-kings over the new Heaven and new earth. We will judge the angels. Again, there are no specifics as to how this will be carried out. However, we will have to wait until we get to Heaven to get the specific job description.

4) *Sharing* (1<sup>st</sup> Jn 3:2; Rev 22:4). Down here on earth, we will never find a perfect church, but in Heaven, we will be a part of a perfect church. The fellowship in Heaven will be far better than any fellowship we have ever experienced down here. Because, we will have our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with us and we will share intimate communion with Him. We will see Him and be with Him, which will be our ultimate satisfaction. We will also share in sweet fellowship with fellow believers without sin.

5) *Studying/ Learning* (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 13:12; Eph 2:6-7). When we get to Heaven, we still want to know everything. We will spend eternity learning more about the infinite majesty of God's person and ways. In Eph 2:6-7, the phrase "show us" means to "reveal" and the phrase "in the coming ages" indicates that there will be a progressive, ongoing revelation, in which we learn more and more about God's grace.

6) *Being served* (LK 12:35-37). Jesus, the ever servant, will minister to His people and meet our needs forever. Jesus serving us down here is just a foretaste of what He is going to do throughout eternity.

## PART 8

### WILL WE EAT IN HEAVEN?

**My comments:** Eating is such an integral part of our everyday lives on earth that it is natural for us to wonder if we will eat in Heaven. I believe the Bible teaches that we will eat in Heaven. Jesus, in His glorified body, ate food (LK 24:41-43). The thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, after His second coming, is often pictured as a great banquet or marriage supper (Mt 8:11 Rev 19:9). Revelation 22:1-2 describes the tree of life that will be in the Heavenly city. It never says specifically that we will eat of the fruit of the tree, but the implication is that is what the fruit is for. You must remember that Jesus told His disciples that He wouldn't eat with them again until they met in the Kingdom of God (LK 22:14-16). I believe that eating in Heaven will be something that is possible for us, but not necessary. It will be something that will be available to us simply for enjoyment and fellowship. But the focus in Heaven will not be on food and eating, instead, it will be on our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, who will satisfy our every longing.

### WHAT KIND OF BODY WILL WE HAVE IN HEAVEN?

**My comments:** We all look forward to getting a new body in Heaven. I can attest to this. Every morning, I go to the gym trying to keep my body from getting in worst shape than it already is in. I often encourage myself with the thought that someday, I will get a new body and I will no longer have to watch what I eat, workout, ice down my ankle, etc. Let's just face it, the older you get, the more you groan for your Heavenly body. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:1-2, we learn that we do have a new body awaiting us. However, the question becomes, what will our glorified bodies be like? Well, we know that they will be like Jesus' resurrected body (1<sup>st</sup> Jn 3:2). This is what we know about His resurrected body:

- He possessed flesh and bones (LK 24:39-40).
- He ate food (LK 24:41-43; Jn 21:12-15).
- He was recognized by His disciples (LK 24:31).
- He was not subject to normal laws of time and space. On two separate occasions, Jesus walked right through the walls of the room where the disciples were meeting (LK 24:36; JN 20:19;26).
- He vanished from sight (LK 24:31).

If we are going to be like Him, then our future bodies will be able to do the same things Jesus' body did. Perhaps! They will never be subject to disease, decay or death.

Listed below are some fabulous facts about our new bodies (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 15:42-44):

#### OLD BODY

Sown a perishable body  
Sown in dishonor  
Sown in weakness  
Sown a natural body

#### NEW BODY

Raised an imperishable body  
Raised in glory  
Raised in power  
Raised a spiritual body

## HOW OLD WILL WE APPEAR TO BE IN HEAVEN?

**My comments:** The million dollar question is; if I die when I am 87 years old, how old will be when I get to Heaven? What if my brother died when he was 21 years old and that was 50 years ago? Will he recognize me if I die when I am 79? What about my child who died when she was only 3 years old? How old will she be in Heaven? Well, the Bible never explicitly tells us how old we will be upon our arrival in Heaven. Therefore, answering this question requires some sanctified speculation. So here it is; now, we know God created Adam and Eve with apparent age. That is, they were not created as children who had to go through the normal stages of physical development. Presumably, Adam and Eve were created at the optimal age of physical development and God declared that they were good (Gen 1:31). Also, when Jesus died, He was resurrected at the prime of His physical development. Jesus was 33 years old when He was resurrected and appeared to His disciples, yet; He was recognizable to them and must have appeared to be about the same age as when He died. The Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, maintains that since Jesus was in the stature of the fullness of His physical humanity at age thirty, our resurrection body will be like the one we had at that age. The Bible says that when we receive our new resurrection bodies, they will be like Jesus' resurrection body (Phil 3:20-21). Now, this does not mean that if you were at a specific size you didn't like at the age of 30-33 that you will be sealed into that specified state forever. It doesn't necessarily refer to your size, but, the ideal is that you will be in your prime. Let me remind you that all of this is pure speculation. I can safely say that the Lord will give us a body that has no more pains or deficiencies. It will reflect how we looked at the prime of our earthly life and for those who died before they reached the prime of life, I believe the Lord, who knows all things, will give them a body that will reflect how they would have appeared at the optimal stage of development. We will know all of this for sure when we all get to Heaven. I don't know for sure what age we will be. But, I do know, whatever age we are will be great because, God is the one who will give us these new bodies and only He can give us His very best. I have listed below the thoughts of some theologians about this subject.

*Thomas Aquinas.* The great medieval theologian, argued that we will all be the age of Christ when He was crucified, which is about thirty-three. Aquinas pointed out: Human nature is deficient in a twofold manner; in one way because it has not yet obtained its ultimate perfection, and in a second way, because it has already receded from its ultimate perfection. Human nature is deficient. The first way is in children, and the second way in the aged. Therefore; in each of these cases, human nature will be brought back by the resurrection of the state of its ultimate perfection, which is in the state of youth, toward which, the movement of growth is terminated, and from which, the movement of degeneration begins.

Hank Hanegraff suggests, "Our DNA is programmed in such a way that at a particular point, we reach optimal development from a functional perspective. For the most part, it appears that we reach this stage somewhere in our twenties and thirties..... If the blueprints for our glorified bodies are in the DNA, then it would stand to reason that our

bodies will be resurrected at the optimal stage of development determined by our DNA”(Resurrection, Nashville: Word,2000)

## PART 9

### DO INFANTS AND CHILDREN WHO DIE GO TO HEAVEN?

**My comments: One of the most horrible experiences a person can face in this life is the loss of a small child. We all know families that have suffered this tragic trauma. When this occurs’ the parents, especially if they are believers, always ask me if they will see their child again someday in Heaven. I tell them I believe that all who die without the ability to understand or believe the truth of the gospel, go to Heaven. This would include: pre-born children, infants, young children, and those who suffer from serious mental challenges. This is the view that I believe best represents the teaching of the Bible and these are the reasons why:**

- 1. The age of accountability. This is one crucial bible teaching we must recognize, with the exception of the mentally handicapped, that every person reaches a time of personal and moral accountability before God. The time of accountability is different for everyone, so please don’t think that there is anything magical about the age of 12. For some, the age of accountability may be 8, and for others it may be 14.**
- 2. The testimony of Jesus, during His earthly ministry, always seemed to indicate that children are an integral part of God’s kingdom. He rebuked His disciples for not allowing them to come around Him (Mt 19:13-15), and Jesus always referred to His young followers as children.**
- 3. Scriptural silence. There is a deafening biblical silence concerning any infants or children in hell. I understand that one must be very careful with arguments from silence; the silence of this issue is worth noting. Robert Lightner, a professor of systematic theology says, “Not once, in all the references to infants, is there such a hint that they will ever be damned to eternal perditions after death or, should they die before they have opportunity to respond to the gospel.” (Heaven for Those Who Can’t Believe, Schaumburg IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1977,18)**

### WHAT IS THE NEW JERUSALEM?

Scripture describes Heaven as both a country (LK 19:12; Heb 11:14-16;) and a city (Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2). In Revelation 21 and 22, the place God and His people will live together is called a city 15 times. The repetition of the word and the detailed description of the architecture, walls, streets, and other features of the city, suggest that the city isn’t merely a figure of speech, but a literal geographical location.

The city at the center of the future Heaven is called the New Jerusalem. The city is portrayed as a walled city and its security is beyond question. It is perched on the peak of a hill that no invading army could ascend. The city’s walls are so thick that they couldn’t be breached by any siege engine and so high that no human could hope to scale them. Now of course, the city will never ever be under attack, but its structure will remind us of God’s might and commitment to protect His people.

**My comments: Many believers get the Third Heaven and the Millennium Reign mixed up with the New Jerusalem, but they are totally different. The Third Heaven is where a believer goes after death to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Millennium Reign will occur after the 7 years of tribulation when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth and reign for one thousand years. He will set up His kingdom on earth. Jerusalem will be His capital. It will be an era of peace and happiness. Nature will be entirely different. The desert will blossom like a rose; a lion will lie down with a lamb. Mankind will live to a very old age, but, will still die. There will be no more wars and this will be a time of great prosperity. But, during this time, sin will be absent, unlike in the New Jerusalem (Isa32:1; 35:1-7; 65:17-25). The New Jerusalem is our permanent living place where there will be no more sin, no more sorrow, and no more death. It is on the New Earth that we will be living with God (Rev 21).**

### **WHAT ARE THE CITY'S DIMENSIONS?**

The city's exact dimensions are measured by an angel and reported to be 12 stadia, the equivalent of 1,400 miles or 2,200 kilometers in length, width and height (Rev 21:15-16). Although these proportions may have symbolic importance, this doesn't mean they can't be literal. In fact, scripture emphasizes that the dimensions are given in "man's measurement" (Rev 21:17). A metropolis of this size, in the middle of the United States, would stretch from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border. The New Jerusalem is all the square footage anyone could ask for. But, what is even more astounding, is the city's 1,400-mile height. There is no need to worry that Heaven will be crowded. The ground level of the city will be nearly two million square miles. This is forty times bigger than England and fifteen thousand times bigger than London. It's ten times as big as France or Germany and far larger than India. But remember, this just the ground level. Given the dimensions of a 1,400- mile cube, if the city consisted of different levels (we don't know this to be a fact) and if each story were a generous twelve feet high, the city could have over 600,000 stories. If they were on different levels billions of people could occupy the New Jerusalem, with many square miles per person. If these numbers are taken figuratively and not literal (and that is certainly possible), surely they are still meant to convey that the home of God's people will be extremely large and roomy. (HEAVEN, Alcorn, Randy C.: Tyndale, 2004, 242)

### **WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CITY'S GATES?**

The city has a great, high wall with twelve gates and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There are three gates in the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west (Rev 21:12-13). The gates will remain open because there will be no enemies outside of the city's gates. The entire New Earth will be filled with the knowledge of God (Heb 2:14) and the citizens from outside the gates will regularly travel in through them (Rev 21:24-26). All enemies of the Kingdom will be forever cast into the lake of fire and far away from the New Earth. So the gates will remain open. The open gates guarded by angels remind us that our safety has been brought and permanently secured by God. The city's open gates will serve as a great equalizer and there will be no elitism in Heaven; everyone will have access because of Christ's blood. His death on Calvary's cross was the admission ticket. People won't have to prove their worth or buy their way through the gates. Everyone will have access to everything the city has to offer. No one will have to stand on the outside peeking over the gate trying to see what is going on.

**My comments: People have always gathered at city gates to share news and tell stories. I believe that in the New Jerusalem things will be no different. I believe we will gather at the gates to hear other believer's stories, and we will have our own stories to tell. Not only will there be stories, but, we will better understand them and the best part is that no one will ever have to wonder if the stories we are hearing are true, because we will not be capable of lying.**

## **HOW EXTRAVAGANT WILL THE CITY BE?**

The New Jerusalem will be filled with visual magnificence. "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal" (Rev 21:21). John later goes on to say, "The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stones and gold represent incredible wealth, suggestive of the exorbitant riches of God's splendor. The great streets of the city were pure gold, like transparent glass (Rev 21:21). Each gate is carved from a single, huge pearl. Among the ancients, the pearl was highest in value among the precious stones.

**My comments: The New Jerusalem is going to be a very grand city. It will be just like Jesus, who always gives us His very best. The New Jerusalem is going to be better than any blessing that we will ever receive from God while we were on earth. Regardless of how much we tried to live our best for the Lord Jesus Christ, our efforts are going to pale in comparison to what He has for us to live in forever. "Won't it be grand, won't it be grand. I'm going home to live with Jesus, won't it be grand."**

## **PART 10**

### **WHAT WILL IT MEAN TO SEE GOD?**

If we don't base our perspective of Heaven on a clear understanding of our bodily resurrection and truth about the physical nature of the New Earth, our concept of being with God will be more like that of Eastern mysticism, than of biblical Christianity. The magnificent theme of beholding God's face shouldn't be poisoned by stereotypes. I hope we can approach this topic of what it means to see God with the richness and vitality it deserves. So the question becomes, will we actually see God when we get to Heaven? You first have to realize that a longing for Heaven is a longing for God. Being with God is the heart and soul of Heaven and the New Earth. Every other Heavenly pleasure will derive from, and be secondary to, seeing God. God's greatest gift to us is, and will always be, HIMSELF.

Ancient theologians often spoke of the "beatific vision". This term comes from the Latin words that together mean "a happy—making sight", and Revelation 22:4 states "They will see His face..." To be told we will see God's face is shocking to anyone who understands God's transcendence and inapproachability. Moses saw God, but not God's face. First Timothy 6:16 says that God "lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" Therefore, seeing God's face would require us to undergo something very radical. Hebrew 12:14 says "Without holiness no one will see the Lord". I believe we will see God only because we will be fully righteous in Christ and completely sinless. Not only will we see His face and live, but we will likely wonder if we ever lived before we saw His face! To see God will be our greatest joy.

God (who is transcendent) became immanent in Jesus Christ (who is Immanuel "God with us" (Mt 1:23) God, the son, pitched His tent among us on Earth, as one of us (Jn 1:14). Therefore, when we see Jesus in Heaven,

we will see God. We believe that Jesus Christ is God and a permanent manifestation of God. Jesus said to Phillip “Anyone who has seen Me, has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). So certainly, a primary way we will see the Father on the New Earth, is through His Son, Jesus. Job, in his anguish, cried out “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end, He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes. I, and not another, How my heart yearns within me (Job 19:26-27).” However, we need not wait for the New Earth to catch a glimpse of God. We’re told His “invisible qualities” can be “clearly seen” in “what has been made” (Rm 1:20). Yes, God can be seen in the flowers, the sun, the trees and in the people around us, but on that day, when this life is over and the curse of sin has been cured, we will see God!

**My comments: We will spend eternity worshiping, exploring and serving God; seeing His magnificent beauty in everything and everyone around us. God promised Simeon, a “righteous and devout” old man who lived in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus’ birth, that he wouldn’t die until he had seen the Messiah. The culminating joy of Simeon’s life was when he saw Jesus (LK 2:25-32). As Simeon lived his earthly life in anticipation of seeing Jesus, so should we. When John saw Jesus in Heaven, he fell at His feet as though dead (Rev 1:17). I can’t wait. Imagine how exhilarating it will be to be with God forever. We will be looking at Him, talking to Him, worshipping Him, embracing Him, eating with Him, walking with Him and even laughing with Him. In the words of Augustine on seeing God, “God himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall be our reward. As, there is nothing greater or better than God Himself. God has promised us Himself. God shall be the end of all our desires, who will be seen without end, loved without cloy, and praised without weariness” So I conclude this study with the words from an old hymn:**

*O I want to see Him, look upon His face,  
there to sing forever of His saving grace  
on the streets of glory let me lift my voice  
cares all pass home at last ever to rejoice.*

*The End*

#### **REFLECTION:**

This bible study does not require a test at the end. Instead, I would like for you to reflect on what you have learned about Heaven from the scriptures. Has your view of Heaven changed, and if so, in what way? What do you look forward to the most when you get there? According to what we have learned, what type of crown will you receive? Reflect on these things and thank you for your participation.

**Peace & Love!**