

We started this 'Mini-Series' on Heaven
with one VERY BIG TRUTH - Heaven is REAL

& we tried hard to begin to shake up
any possible misconceptions - we might have about Heaven

Lst msg was about the REAL New Earth & our REAL New Bodies -
trying to get a better picture of the REALNESS of eternity

But there IS one thing that we haven't talked about yet
& it begins with Questions like these

WHEN do we GO
to the ETERNAL Heaven??

Are there Saved people there NOW?

Do they have their Resurrected Bodies NOW?

& If they are NOT in the ETERNAL HEAVEN NOW
then WHERE are they?

So today - let's get a better grasp
on the PRESENT HEAVEN & the ETERNAL HEAVEN - OK

Let's Pray

Let's TURN over to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NLT)

13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

If your Bible uses "SLEEP" here
It is a EUPHEMISM for "DIED"

A Euphemism is . . . *an indirect expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or unpleasant.*

Paul says - *We want you to KNOW what has happened to the believers who have died - so that you don't grieve, like people who have NO HOPE*

This Vs is talking about BELIEVERS who have died
In Christ - BEFORE the Rapture

& God wants you to know
what happens to those believers

Here's the important DISTINCTION

When a believer dies today
they go Immediately to Heaven

Heaven that we are calling - The "PRESENT HEAVEN"

Then - The "Heaven" we are studying in Revelation Ch's 21 & 22
Is most often called - "THE ETERNAL HEAVEN"

Are they both HEAVEN - YES !
Are there DIFFERENCES - YES !

But they're BOTH Heaven

because Heaven is primarily defined as
"The place where God Dwells"

& God Currently Dwells in the PRESENT Heaven

& God Will Certainly Dwell in the ETERNAL Heaven

The Bible teaches - When a Believer Dies
they go immediately to be with the Lord

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NLT)

8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

THE NKJV says here - *[We would] rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord*

For a Believer - *Being Absent from the Body*
Is Being Present with the Lord

& That - Being "Immediately Present" with the Lord
Is what we are referring to as - "The Present Heaven"

What we call **HEAVEN** today

IS the **place** where **God dwells** - (definition of heaven)

& **IT IS** the **place** where **believers go** - the **moment** they **die**

AND - there is a **NEW ETERNAL HEAVEN** coming

That **ALL believers** - will **enjoy forever** - **with the Lord**

But - the **Present Heaven IS HEAVEN**

BECAUSE the **Lord** is **There**

& **BECAUSE** the **Lord** - is **There**

it is **FAR BETTER** - than **Being HERE**

Paul says in Philippians 1:23–24 (NLT)

23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.

24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

Paul knows - **As soon** as he dies

He's **going** - to be WITH **the Lord** - **In Heaven**

Which he knows - is FAR BETTER (for him) - than being here

Now this **Present Heaven / Eternal Heaven** Distinction

Often brings up the **question** of - **PURGATORY**

So - **Let's talk** a **minute** about **THAT**

Because there are **SO MANY** people
who **have** been **influenced** by the **Catholic Church**

I **often read** The **Official Catholic Theology Website**
catholic.com

& **on** the **doctrine** of **Purgatory** - in **one place** on the
official Catholic website - it **says**

***The Catholic Church defines purgatory as “a purification, so as to
achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven . . .”***

& in **another place** on **catholic.org**

***God wants us to be perfect. If we are not perfected by the time we
die, we will be perfected in purgatory.***

Both of those **statements directly contradict**
the **Bible’s Perfectly Clear teaching**

that **We receive** The **Righteousness of Christ**
Thru FAITH in Him - **ALONE** - with **NO WORKS** added

& the idea that **someone** could become
“More Perfected” for **Heaven** - by **being in Purgatory**

than **they can** by thru **Faith** in **Jesus Christ** -
cannot (in any way) **be supported** by **Scripture**

BUT - Catholic.com - DOES Support
the **Doctrine** of **Purgatory** - **with Scripture**

But they point to a scripture and then,
with **COMPLEX EXPLANATIONS**

They explain HOW that scripture
Is actually speaking of Purgatory

In the end - Purgatory is one of many Doctrines
in the Catholic Church

that is clearly based on Church History & Church Tradition

& then they FORCE Scripture
to support their Church's Historical Doctrine

Which is EXACTLY HOW
SO MANY other religions USE the Bible

to support THEIR Doctrines
that are NOT actually IN the Bible

HOWEVER - Does the Bible talk plainly
about a PRESENT HEAVEN

that will one day become
the ETERNAL HEAVEN? - ABSOLUTELY

So - Let's look at some of those scriptures

We've already seen
TWO Scrip's from The N.T.

that clearly refer to a Present Heaven
where Believes go Immediately when they die

Now - let's go back - to the GOSPELS
TURN to LUKE Ch 23

Jesus is on the Cross - & the two Thieves are beside him
one RAILING on Jesus - the other one is NOT

& the one thief demonstrates true faith when he says in

Luke 23:42–43 (NLT)

*42 . . . “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”
43 And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in
paradise.”*

This word translated Paradise here

is a word used in the GREEK O.T.
to refer to The Garden of Eden - where God dwelt with Man

& the word Paradise is used often
to Refer to the PRESENT HEAVEN

& Jesus says - Today - You will be there with me

Let's Look at another one

Turn over to Luke Ch 16

The story of the Rich Man & Lazarus

Some say this IS a Parable

Some say this is NOT a Parable

But **in EITHER CASE** we **CAN** get an idea here
of **what** the **PRESENT HEAVEN** is **like**

Luke 16:19–31 (NLT)

19 Jesus said, “There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury.

20 At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores.

21 As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man’s table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

22 “Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet (aka - Abraham’s Bosom). The rich man also died and was buried,

23 and he went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

24 “The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’

25 “But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish.

26 And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.’

27 “Then the rich man said, ‘Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home.

28 For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.’

29 “But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.’

30 “The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’

31 “But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

So - What can we learn from this teaching from Jesus?

- 1) There **IS** a **PLACE** where **those** who **die go instantly**
- 2) It is a **place** of **CONSCIOUS Existence**
- 2) There is **Either COMFORT** - or **TORMENT** there
- 3) There is **NO Switching Places** - & **NO Crossing Over**

Some of the other things this scripture possibly indicates are:

- 1) **We** will be **Recognizable** - **Retaining our Names**
- 2) **We** will be **able to Communicate**
- 3) **We** will have **knowledge** of **HOW** we lived **on Earth**
- 4) **We** will have **concern** for **those on earth** we’ve **left**

I say “**Possibly**” on **some** of those things

Because IF this scripture **WAS MEANT** - to be a **Parable**

Parables are **MEANT** - to Teach **ONE MAIN POINT**

& I hope you can see

the **ONE MAIN POINT** here is:

Be on the **Right Side** of this **CHASM**
when **this day** comes for **YOU**

Let's look at another one

In **ACTS Ch 7** - the **1st Martyr** (Stephen)
is **about** to be **stoned** - By the Jewish Religious Leaders

Acts 7:55–56 (NLT)

55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand.

56 And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

Here - **God opens** the **PRESENT HEAVEN** to **Stephen**

& Stephen SEES Jesus - in His **Glorified Body**
STANDING - at the **Right Hand** of God

The fact that Stephen **RECOGNIZES Jesus** is **Significant**
& that **Jesus** is **STANDING** (not floating) is **Significant**

& clearly - **the Lord** was **showing Stephen**
WHERE He was **About to Go**

Let's Look at another one

This time - on the MT of Transfiguration with Jesus

Luke 9:28–32 (NLT)

28 . . . Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray. (Mt of Transfiguration)

29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

30 Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus.

31 They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

It's Safe to say - Moses & Elijah are
DEFINITELY in the PRESENT Heaven

& Here - They Appear - GLORIOUS to see
& SOMEHOW - The Disciples Recognize Them

& they are TALKING With Jesus
regarding what's about to happen

This is a HUGE scripture
regarding 'Relationships in Heaven'

Because we Clearly See
Moses, Elijah, & Jesus - IN Relationship

& so - THAT is a GLIMPSE

into **SOME** of **what** - the **PRESENT HEAVEN** is **LIKE**

So Now - **Let's TALK** about - the **ETERNAL HEAVEN**

But FIRST - **BEFORE** the **ETERNAL HEAVEN** **Begins**

Those who have **died 'In Christ'** will **Receive**
Their **RESURRECTED** & **GLORIFIED Bodies**

They will **Receive** them - at the **Same Time** that

We who **are still Alive** - Will be **RAPTURED**
& **Receive OUR Glorified Bodies**

Let's **turn back to 1Thes 4** - where we **started** -
& **we'll pick up** where we **left off**

1 Thessalonians 4:14–18 (NLT)

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves.

17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.
18 So encourage each other with these words.

**Vs 14 says - GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM
the believers who have died**

Meaning they are already WITH Him

They will get their Resurrection Bodies FIRST

**Then - Believers who are still ALIVE
Will be - Caught Up (RAPTURED) to join them**

**& together we will Meet the LORD in the Air
& so we will ALWAYS be WITH the Lord**

Therefore encourage one another with these words !!

So - at THIS POINT

**Believers who are already WITH the Lord- &
Believers who have now been RAPTURED**

ALL have their Resurrected & Glorified Bodies

**& we place that event - at REV Ch 4
at the Beginning of the Tribulation**

& then the Tribulation
is Followed by the Millennium

& the Millennium
is Followed by the ETERNAL HEAVEN

& SO - NOW comes the ETERNAL HEAVEN
of Which - the NEW Earth is an Integral Part

This is when ALL Resurrected Believers
will be living forever

In a Resurrected Universe -
with GOD & with *One ANOTHER*

So - All Believers - The EARTH - & The UNIVERSE
Are ALL Resurrected - Glorified - & Perfected

& GOD DWELLS with US

Let's go back to Rev 21 to Close

Revelation 21:1-3 (NLT)

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven
and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.*

*2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from
God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her
husband.*

3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

These 3 vs’s are the CREATION
of the **ETERNAL HEAVEN**

In which ALL BELIEVERS will live with God
AND with one another - FOR ETERNITY

In V.1 The New HEAVEN (our atmosphere & space)
& the **New EARTH - Are created**

& **then** (in V.2) - **The Holy City** (the *Dwelling place of God*)
COMES DOWN INTO the New Heaven & New Earth

& **V.3** says ***Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.***

GOD is Coming **DOWN** to a **NEW Earth**
To **DWELL WITH** - A **Resurrected People** that He **loves**

JUST LIKE God **came down** - to the **Original Earth** He Created
To **DWELL WITH** - **Adam & Eve**

& **the Earth** & our **Atmosphere & Space**

will **ALL** be **RESTORED** to **THE PERFECTION**
God originally **CREATED IT ALL** to be

& the Relationship God created mankind
to have WITH HIM

will be RESTORED to the Perfection -
he originally created our Relationship with him to be

God CREATED you - For Relationship WITH Him
In the Perfect, Glorious Creation he made for us

& God has a Perfect Plan - to Spend Eternity with US
in a Restored ETERNAL HEAVEN & ETERNAL EARTH

Guys - the MORE you CAN Grasp
Of What God has in store for you in Heaven

The LESS you will be CHAINED to THIS WORLD

So - TAKE HOLD of What God has Planned for you

Start your Relationship with Jesus Christ NOW

So that He can Start Preparing a place FOR YOU
To be With Him - For ETERNITY

Let's Pray