

McLaughlin Bible Ministries – Heaven Envisioned
Grace Bible Church
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Heaven Envisioned

Chapter 1 **The Importance of Heaven**

Imagine that you would be leaving your country soon and would spend the next thirty years of your life in a remote new country you knew nothing about. Then imagine that a book was supplied to you with reliable information about your new home that contained a great deal of specific information about life in that new place, including precise details on how to get there. Would you read the book? Most of us would answer “Yes.” Though most people hope to spend eternity in Heaven, very few have studied the exciting details contained in the most reliable travel guide ever written, the Bible, the Word of God. In this study we will examine in detail what the scriptures say about Heaven. However, as we venture into this subject, we need to realize that human words cannot really express the magnificent descriptions of the heavenly state.

Your personal mental image of Heaven can serve as part of your motivation and your attitude concerning your spiritual life here on earth. Once you have studied and learned all the principles found in the doctrine of Heaven, you will be motivated to live for eternal rewards. The *Living Bible* translation says in Colossians 3:1, “*Set your sights on the rich treasures and joys of Heaven where He [Jesus] sits beside God in the place of honor and power.*” In the midst of our worldly pursuits and interests, it is sometimes very difficult to remember that this life is only a testing ground, a place of training that prepares us for the wonders of our eternal home.

Mat 25:34 *Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*

The subject of death and eternity is the last real conversation in our modern culture; even many Christians do not want to talk about the subject of death. If you doubt this statement, try a small experiment. At a party you attend, or in a conversation with others, talk about the death of someone with whom you are all familiar, and watch their reaction. Usually, a gloomy quietness takes over the conversation. Or a morbid “I’m sorry to hear that” will follow! While the subject of death was a great conversation piece for the early Christians, in our modern, “liberated” society, it is avoided like the plague by most people. Another reason why a lot of believers do not know much about Heaven is that those whose job it is to prepare them for death and Heaven, such as pastors and parents, are not doing their job. In fact, they are not even prepared to do their job. Christians who attend church seldom hear a sermon of any depth about Heaven. This lack of clear Biblical teaching about Heaven and “the last days” has produced a vacuum concerning eternity in the minds of many believers.

If you were to ask most Christians today to tell you specifically about their expectations for their life in Heaven, you would frequently get a blank stare. They might suggest there would be “streets of gold” and “angels,” but often that is the full extent of their knowledge. There are tragic

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consequences to this lack of teaching on Heaven and our future life. Many Christians have expressed the opinion that the Bible must not say anything very specific about Heaven, and that must be the reason no one talks about it anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible contains thousands of verses that refer to the very real life we shall enjoy in our future home. One problem is that New Age teaching and occult groups are now trying to fill this void by offering their counterfeit and satanic doctrines to the young and uninformed. God created a natural desire in the heart of men and women to know the future and to explore the reality of eternity.

Ecc 3:11 *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*

When the Church abandoned the subject of genuine teaching about Heaven, Satan was quite willing to supply a counterfeit substitute. Many modern heresies were born in the vacuum created by the failure of today's church leadership to present the great doctrines of Heaven, Hell (the eternal lake of fire), and Eternity. Few today realize that for almost two thousand years, until this last generation, the Church has consistently taught these great truths about Heaven. Though most people hope to spend eternity in a place called "Heaven," very few have ever studied or read the exciting details in the Bible.

*Webster's New World Dictionary** describes Heaven as "the dwelling place of God and His angels, variously conceived of as the place where the blessed will live after death." It also describes Heaven as a "place of great beauty and pleasure." Recent polls actually indicate that approximately seventy-five percent of the American people believe in Heaven. Unfortunately, many of these people know little more about Heaven than this description from a dictionary. The Bible is filled with specific facts about Heaven, and we are going to examine what it has to say about our true home and our future life there.

First and foremost, Heaven is said to be a glorious place, which Isaiah called "*God's holy and glorious habitation*" in Isaiah 63:15a.

Isa 63:15 *Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation.*

It is so glorious that only Almighty God could conceive the absolute perfection of this eternal paradise, which He has prepared for His children. Heaven is so magnificent that it is far beyond anything any of us could ever contemplate or imagine.

Some points in this study are deduced by comparing some scriptures with others. For example, according to the Bible, there seems to be a way that the fallen angels can prohibit space travel, or travel from Heaven to the earth; this is taught in Daniel 10:11-13.

Dan 10:11-13 *And he said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia [one of the angels of darkness that represented the Persian Empire, which is now Iran] was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes [the archangel Michael], came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.*

This is an example of the intense battles that take place in the spiritual world.

Also, it can be deduced from the scriptures that when a believer dies, he will immediately see the smiling faces of angels waiting to escort him to Heaven. And when we look into the faces of those angels, we will know that the troubles of life on earth are behind us and a wonderful new existence has begun. They will carry us through the first and second Heaven into the third Heaven—the home of God. And when we take off on this magnificent journey, we will literally soar through the atmosphere that surrounds earth. We learn this from what the angels did for Lazarus when he died, Luke 16:22, “*Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom [a reference to paradise].*”

The first Heaven is the atmosphere and clouds that we can see with our eyes, as in Acts 14:17, “*He did good and gave you rains from **Heaven**.*” The second Heaven is the place where God’s angels and Satan’s evil spirits engage in spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6:12. “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the **Heavenly places**.*” Finally, we will enter the third Heaven, our eternal home where the Lord Jesus Christ is “*seated at the right hand of the majestic [God] in Heaven,*” Hebrews 8:1.

It is interesting to note that there have been many deathbed testimonies from people who were with Christian family members who spoke of the presence of angels just before they died. Although these testimonies cannot be said to be absolutely conclusive, there is a remarkable similarity in the deathbed scenes of the many people who died at different times in different parts of the world.

Chapter 2 **The Physical Characteristics of Heaven**

Many believers assume that the moment they die, one split second later they are in Heaven, but there are no scriptures to support this belief. They base this position on what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:52, “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*” This verse is talking about the resurrection, or the rapture, of the Church, and is not a teaching on the believer’s after-death experience. Does this verse say we are going to meet the Lord in our resurrection bodies *in Heaven*? No! 1 Thessalonians 4:17 tells us that at the resurrection of the Church we will meet the Lord *in the air* above the earth: “*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*” Heaven, however, is billions of light-years away, far above the earth “in the recesses of the North,” Isaiah 14:13.

Imagine for a moment what we will see as we approach the third Heaven. Remember, this is not a precise, accurate description, which would be impossible for the finite mind to comprehend, but simply one more devotional than doctrinal.

Perhaps this experience can be compared to landing in an airplane on earth. First, Heaven will be recognized from a distance, then as we descend and prepare to land, we will be able to see it in much more detail. It will begin to become evident that we will not be spending eternity floating around on white clouds. As we continue our approach, the New Jerusalem, the capital city of Heaven, will come into focus, and its overwhelming size will astonish us. It will be far more

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magnificent than we could ever imagine. It is described as *“the city which has fixed and firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God”* in Hebrews 11:10. Specific measurements are given to us in the Word of God.

Rev 21:15-16 *And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.*

It is said to be 1,500 miles across in length, width, *and height!* Can you visualize a city so large that the city limits are 1,500 miles apart? The length and width make it approximately half the size of the United States—and 1,500 miles high! In contrast to our flat, earthly cities, it is difficult to even imagine such a city. No city on earth can begin to compare. The highest skyscraper in the world would look like a tiny pebble next to the heavenly city, New Jerusalem. The best way to visualize the immense height of the Holy City is to take the illustration of half the United States and “stand it on end” to look at it vertically. This will give us some indication of the enormous height of New Jerusalem. None of us have ever seen anything approaching the magnitude of the Holy City. Architects have calculated that the enormous size of the New Jerusalem would easily provide a mansion of over a half mile in length and breadth to every believer from Adam to the present. God does not do things in a small way!

Some believe New Jerusalem is like a cube. It could also be as a mountain with a peak 1,500 miles high. For example, when the Apostle John was taken to Heaven, he said in Revelation 21:10, *“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God.”* New Jerusalem could be an extremely large mountainous city. It is difficult to estimate exactly how large this city is, but the size of New Jerusalem is somewhere in the vicinity of seven hundred to eight hundred times as large as the United States. And no matter how large it turns out to be, we will not be cramped for space because the “Architect and Builder is God” (Heb 11:10).

As the angels carry us closer to the Holy City, our attention might focus on the wall surrounding New Jerusalem. No wall on earth is as large or as beautiful. Revelation 21:17 gives us the measurements of this wall: *“And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.”* Imagine a city with a 1,500-mile wall on each of its four sides that is seventy-two yards high. This huge wall is very unique. In addition to being large and beautiful, it also pays tribute to the twelve original apostles of Jesus Christ. (And notice there are only twelve apostles! The self-proclaimed apostles of today are imposters and counterfeits.)

Rev 21:14 *And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

We will see the names of Peter, Andrew, the two James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Thaddaeus, Simon, and the one who replaced Judas Iscariot, the Apostle Paul, memorialized forever. The foundation stones of a wall are usually beneath the surface of the ground; however, these particular foundation stones must extend quite a bit above the surface. Each is approximately five hundred miles long and each of these gigantic stones displays an apostle’s name. It is wonderful to see how the Lord Jesus Christ honors His original apostles.

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Each of these twelve foundation stones also has a large, beautiful jewel, Revelation 21:19-20, *“The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.”*

- Jasper = translucent and multi-colored.
- Sapphire = blue.
- Chalcedony = bluish white.
- Emerald = green.
- Sardonyx = alternating layers of white and orange-red.
- Sardius = blood red.
- Chrysolite = yellow or greenish yellow.
- Beryl = transparent bluish green.
- Topaz = yellowish.
- Chrysoprase = greenish.
- Jacinth = red with a mixture of yellow.
- Amethysts = purple.

The magnificent light of the glory of God will shine through each of these precious gems. Each of these foundation stones is immense, much larger than we can comprehend. When we see them for the first time, we will be stunned by their size and incredible beauty.

The wall on top of these foundation stones is also comprised of a precious gem, Revelation 21:18, *“And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.”* According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, the word translated “jasper” in this passage means “a translucent stone of various colors, especially that of fire.” Just picture for a moment the angels bringing us closer to the Holy City and an immense, transparent, multi-colored wall glowing with many different colors.

There are also twelve gates in the large walls around the Holy City, Revelation 21:12, *“It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.”* There are three gates on each of the four walls, Revelation 21:13, *“There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.”* On the east side are Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, on the south side, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, on the west side, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, and on the north side, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. This wall is the pattern to the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem here on earth, which also has a wall with twelve gates, three on each side. However, the wall around New Jerusalem is much larger and infinitely more attractive.

Now notice in Revelation 21:21, *“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl.”* Try to visualize a large pearl here on earth that’s only a few inches long. Then, try to compare this with the gigantic pearl of each gate. We do not know exactly how high the gates are in the walls surrounding New Jerusalem. However, at the very minimum, they must be at least ten feet in height. We cannot comprehend the size and beauty of the twelve pearls in the gates of the Holy City. We can only compare them with pearls on earth that are created by wounded oysters, which present a very interesting analogy. When a foreign particle like sand finds its way into an oyster, it causes irritation, and pain from this wound causes the oyster to secrete fluid that surrounds the particle and hardens to form a pearl. It is possible that the pearls in the gates of Heaven

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are as large as they are because they were formed to represent the tremendous wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ. This may be one reason why the Bible refers to Heaven as a “pearl of great value” in Matthew 13:45-46, “*Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*” Every Christian approaching a gate of New Jerusalem will be able to go through this gate, only because of the terrible wounds the Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us. These gates will serve as an eternal reminder of the price He paid.

Imagine that the angels have brought you up to one of the twelve gates of New Jerusalem. As you stand there, overwhelmed by the beauty of the foundation stone, the jasper wall, and the immense pearl gate, what will you see? It will be a great occasion for each of us when we go through the gates of New Jerusalem for the first time. There is no joy we have experienced on earth that can compare with the exhilaration and joy we will experience when we first enter the gates of the Holy City. And every Christian will eventually go through one of these gates. Also note that the angel will not have to open the gate because the gates of Heaven are always open. Revelation 21:25 says, “*Its gates shall never be closed.*” The purpose of these gates is not to keep anyone out. This is not necessary. The only ones who can enter these gates are those mentioned in Revelation 21:27, “*And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*”

The gates to the Holy City are merely a place to channel incoming traffic so that everyone entering the gates can be welcomed by an angel. We will no longer be subject to the curse that God placed on the earth after Adam’s sin. There will be no rust or decay because the very process of *entropy*, the “running down” of the universe, will have ceased. When the curse of sin is removed, decay, germs, and decomposition will also be eliminated. Nothing unclean will ever enter there, even though the gates are left open. The angels of God will guard the city forever.

Next, we will probably notice the street beneath our feet. It will be much different from any street on earth. Revelation 21:21b describes it for us: “*And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*” When something is transparent, we’re able to see through it as if we were looking through a pane of glass. Now, anyone reading Revelation 21:21 might think there was only one main street in the New Jerusalem. However, if there are twelve different gates, there must be at least twelve different streets.

Along with the magnificent streets, you will probably notice that a beautiful, clear, sparkling river flows through the center of each of these twelve divided highways. It is a magnificent river that flows directly out of the throne of God and is absolutely spectacular. This river has at least twelve different branches winding through the foothills and mountains of the Holy City. And in Revelation 22:1, we are told it is a river whose waters give life: “*And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*” Apparently there is supernatural power in liquid form flowing through the branches of this river from God’s throne. The water in this river is so pure that it sparkles like crystal continually. It shines with reflected light that mirrors the beauty of its celestial surroundings. When we stand next to the river of life, we can see right through its perfectly clear waters.

In addition to the spectacular beauty and holy qualities of the river of life, we will also see beautiful Heavenly orchards located on both sides of the river. Revelation 22:2 describes them: “*And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” Apparently, the leaves of the tree have something to do with the healing of the nations. Here we are told that nations and races are

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represented in Heaven.

Probably the most impressive characteristic of New Jerusalem is the fact that it glows with God's radiance and is illuminated by His glory. Its glow is compared with a rare and precious jewel such as jasper that shines as clear as crystal. There is no necessity for the sun or moon in Heaven. Revelation 21:23 says, "*And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.*" The glory of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, will produce a beautiful light. The illumination produced by the sun and the moon can never compare with the brilliance of the glory of God. The prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 24:23, "*Then the moon will be embarrassed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders.*"

Try to recall the most beautiful sunrise and sunset you have ever seen, or the most beautiful moonlit night. None of these sights can compare with the beauty produced by the magnificent radiant light of the glory of God. And we will be continually aware of it from the first moment we arrive in Heaven.

In conclusion, New Jerusalem is different from any city on earth. It is the only city designed and built by God and not by creatures. It is absolutely perfect in every respect. When the Apostle John was given this vision of Heaven and the Holy City of New Jerusalem, he described it in Revelation 21.

Rev 21:2,10-11 *And I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband... And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.*

Chapter 3

Touchdown: We Finally Arrive

What will we see as we finally arrive in Heaven? It is at this time that the angels will carry us immediately to the throne of God where we will be face-to-face with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And this glorious event will take place immediately after we die. So while our loved ones on earth are experiencing their reactions of mourning and sadness at our death, we will be experiencing the greatest exhilaration and excitement we have ever known. Our finite minds cannot begin to comprehend what Isaiah 35:2 describes: “*They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.*” There are no words in our human vocabulary to describe the brilliance of the glory of God.

Shortly after we die, we will actually be able to see the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory and majesty. We will feel overwhelming exhilaration when we are actually able to see with our own eyes “*the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,*” Revelation 22:13. He is the Beginning and the End. He existed before everything else, and He will always exist in all His majesty. Every part of Heaven is filled with His glory. Nothing we have ever experienced can compare with the overwhelming wonder of being face-to-face with the glory of God. Ezekiel tried to describe something of Heaven to us in Ezekiel 1:26-28.

Eze 1:26-28 “*Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli [a translucent blue or violet-blue or greenish-blue gem] in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.*”

When we see God in all His glory, we will be so overwhelmed that we will not be able to stand in His presence. In fact, we may all fall flat on our faces just as Ezekiel did. This description of the glory of God in the Old Testament is confirmed in the Revelation 4:2-3, “*Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in Heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.*” Jasper is a precious green stone that shines brightly like a crystal. The sardius is a reddish-orange gem that radiates a beautiful light and appears as if it has fire inside it. And once again, we are told that a rainbow surrounds the throne of God. The lesson that is taught by these passages is the absolute brilliance of the Lord Jesus Christ and how we will not be able to take our eyes off Him because we will be so filled with reverence and awe.

After we report to the Lord and pay homage to Him, it will be time to be reunited with our Christian loved ones who had passed on before us and to see members of the human race we have always wanted to meet, the heroes of yesterday and today. Think of the rich, intimate fellowship that will take place in Heaven. We will begin to enjoy a wonderful reunion with our Christian loved ones and friends who preceded us to Heaven. Many of us have experienced loneliness after our loved ones have died, but on our arrival day in Heaven, this loneliness will end forever as our loved ones welcome us with open arms. Eyes that were once filled with tears when these people died will sparkle with joy when we see them again. Loved ones who suffered from health problems will be in

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perfect health. They will be happier than we have ever seen them.

Some Christians will have a large welcoming committee, while others will not, but one thing is for certain, no matter how many people are waiting for us, it will be a heartwarming time of fellowship and friendship. We should all live in anticipation of this wonderful occasion. The greatest family reunion on earth cannot begin to compare with the great festive reunions that will take place shortly after we arrive in Heaven. Our loved ones will have many awesome and marvelous things to share with us. Every relationship we have in Heaven will be much closer than the best relationship any of us ever had with any other person here on earth. Even though we will completely enjoy our reunion with friends and loved ones, we will not be spending eternity fellowshiping exclusively with members of this small group. After we enjoy our reunion with friends and loved ones, we will all begin to develop close, intimate relationships with Christians we have never known before meeting them in Heaven. There are no walls between people in Heaven. Everyone there is perfectly humble and loving. No one will ever withdraw from anyone else.

As the Apostle John teaches in 1 John 1:7, *“If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.”* If we walk in the light on earth, we are able to enjoy wonderful fellowship with one another. However, in Heaven everyone walks in the light of the Lord and because of this, we will all have magnificent fellowship there. No one in Heaven will be difficult to love as they are sometimes on earth. All the human traits that cause problems on earth will disappear when we arrive in Heaven. No one is arrogant, bitter, jealous, vindictive, or rude. There are no unkind words or angry looks. What we see in Galatians 5:19-21 will never exist in Heaven.

Gal 5:19-21 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Almost every sin on earth has its root in selfishness. However, there will not be any sins in Heaven because everyone there will be perfectly knit together by the virtue-love of God. All of these earthly imperfections will disappear, and we will be perfect just as the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect.

In His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord spoke to His Father praying, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:20). God’s perfect will is not always done on earth, but everything in Heaven is done according to His will. When we are there, we will be totally occupied with worshipping and serving and loving the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as loving others! All the misery caused by self-centeredness on earth will have disappeared. Everyone will enjoy a magnificent life because everyone there is completely selfless. In fact, it will be just as natural for us to be unselfish in Heaven as it is natural to be selfish here on earth. We will not even have to work at being unselfish, humble, and loving once we are in Heaven, because we could not be selfish, even if we tried. We will all have that nature in 1 John 3:9 that cannot sin: *“He cannot sin, because he is born of God.”* There will be no hypocrisy, just perfect people in a perfect environment. Paul knew this and therefore he could say in Philippians 1:21, *“For me, living is Christ, likewise dying is profit,”* or in 2 Corinthians 5:1, *“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.”*

Chapter 4

Our Bodies in Heaven: What Will We Look Like?

No matter how good our physical condition may be, our earthly bodies are constantly decaying. Through diet, exercise, and even positive reaction to stressful situations, many people are able to slow down the rate of decay, but decay is still inevitable. But we should never lose heart because of this, and 2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us why: “*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [human body] is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*” Our decaying mortal bodies cannot live in Heaven where everything is fresh, beautiful, immortal, and eternal. Nothing in Heaven perishes; nothing there is of the earth. God never intended for us to live in Heaven in these decomposing bodies. He gave us these physical bodies for our lives on earth.

1Co 15:50 *Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Every Christian whose name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will receive a new Heavenly body just like the body of “glory and majesty” Jesus Christ received. Our perishable, decaying bodies will be changed into imperishable bodies that will never grow old or die. When we depart from this life and leave these bodies, we shall not merely be spirits without bodies; we will have wonderful new bodies in Heaven made for us by God Himself and not by human hands. We will be in much greater physical condition than any member of the human race ever attained on earth. We will never be tired or weary or sick. Everyone in Heaven will be filled with supernatural energy and no one will need to sleep. Furthermore, our new bodies will not be restricted in any way. The law of gravity and all other earthly restrictions will no longer apply to us. We will be just like the Lord Jesus Christ who was able to ascend into Heaven after receiving His glorified body.

As a guarantee that all of this will come to pass, the Father has given us His Holy Spirit. Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians that deep down inside we yearn to put on our Heavenly bodies and go to Heaven.

2Co 5:1-6 *For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from Heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*

Every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is time spent away from our eternal home in Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ. With this in mind we should not be afraid to die, but we should actually look forward to it, for then we will be at home with the Lord, where we truly belong.

2Co 5:7-8 *For we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*

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Phi 3:20-21 *For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Now, what about our Heavenly bodies? What will they be like? Well, we know what they won't be like. The bodies we inhabit on earth are referred to in the Bible as "tents." A tent is a *temporary* dwelling place. Our bodies were designed for life on earth, which is our temporary dwelling place. This is why in Hebrews 11:13 we are said to be "*strangers and exiles on the earth.*" When we die and leave these bodies, we will have wonderful celestial new bodies in Heaven designed for us by God Himself.

For a good illustration of this change in bodies, we can take a look at nature and the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Caterpillars are usually ugly and very limited as they crawl slowly upon the ground. On the other hand, butterflies are very beautiful, and they can fly freely through the air. When the time comes for a caterpillar to be transformed into a butterfly, it forms a cocoon called a *chrysalis*, which looks like a small brown bag and usually hangs from the limb of a tree for several weeks. During this time, a tremendous struggle takes place within the chrysalis. Most butterflies have to labor for many days before they are able to break through the cocoon, expand their wings, and fly away. This metamorphosis is quite similar to what will happen to us before we receive our Heavenly bodies. Some of us "sigh and groan inwardly" because we are growing older and as the aging process takes place, some people struggle with aches and pains in their bodies just as a butterfly struggles within a cocoon. Now, if God is able to produce a beautiful butterfly from an ugly caterpillar, He certainly is able to change our aging earthly bodies to magnificent new Heavenly bodies. Some Christians have kept their bodies in fine physical condition and they are quite pleased with their earthly bodies. However, it is still important to realize that the beauty and glory of our Heavenly bodies is of one kind, while the beauty and glory of earthly bodies is of a different kind.

1Co 15:39-44 *All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the Heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

All Christians will need new Heavenly bodies. First of all, if we die before the Rapture, our new bodies will be similar to the body Jesus received after He rose from the dead. This was not an interim body like ours, but was similar to our interim body, and therefore, for theological purposes, we will call this His unglorified resurrected human body. "Interim" means an interval of time between one event and another. Remember that when our Lord rose from the dead, He had a resurrected body that was seen before He received His glorified body as a winner in the angelic conflict. This is because we would not be able to see Him in His glorious resurrected body without being consumed by its ultimate glory. He will have that body in Heaven throughout all eternity. His Heavenly body is described for us in Revelation.

Rev 1:14-16 *And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters, and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*

This is His glorified resurrected body rather than the one that He had when He appeared on earth in the days before being seated at the right hand of God the Father. This includes the story of the two men walking on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13.

Luk 24:13-35 *And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place. And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.” And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures. And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” And He went in to stay with them. And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the scriptures to us?”*

These two men spent hours with the Lord, yet they did not recognize Him until they noticed how He broke bread with them. Now if He appeared to them in all of His glory, they would have fallen on their faces awestruck unable to look upon Him with their human eyes. They would have all been like John in Revelation 1:17, “*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.*” John was overwhelmed by our Lord’s glory in His Heavenly resurrected body. Again, take a look at 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but*

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some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

We know a little bit about what our Heavenly bodies will be like based on what our Lord’s body is like, because our resurrection body will be exactly like His, Philippians 3:20-21, “*For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*”

1Jo 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

When we are in Heaven, we will be able to travel instantly from one place to another. It will be easier for us to go fifteen hundred miles than it is for us to take one step on earth now. The freedom and resilience of our Heavenly bodies will be much greater than we can comprehend at this time. The Bible gives us only a slight indication of what we will be able to do when we are there.

Luk 24:36-43 *And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.*

Jesus apparently appeared very suddenly in the middle of the room where the men were talking. This is why they were startled and terrified and thought they saw a ghost. Jesus assured them that He was not a ghost. He invited the disciples to examine His glorified body. On another occasion, the disciples locked themselves in a room because they were afraid of the Jews. Suddenly, Jesus appeared before them.

Joh 20:19 *When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*

He was able to go through the walls of the room. There was no other way for Him to get past the locked doors. We must remove all the limitations of earthly thinking to begin to understand the magnificent experience that awaits us when we receive our glorified bodies. So, the next question is: “When will we receive our interim bodies?” The answer is, the moment we die! When will we receive our resurrected bodies? This will occur when the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His Church, **1Jo 3:2**, “*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*”

If we go immediately to Heaven when we die, but do not receive our glorified bodies until the Lord returns, what will we look like in the interim state? Will we look like “ghosts”? Will we be recognizable? The Bible does not tell us everything about this, but it does give us some interesting facts that indicate we will be able to recognize one another before we receive our glorified bodies.

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Shortly after Jesus died, Mary Magdalene went back to His tomb and found it was empty. She was very upset by this.

Joh 20:11-17 *But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”*

Jesus had yet not ascended into Heaven. He had yet not received His glorified body. But He did not look like a ghost. He obviously was recognizable as a human being. However, Mary was not able to recognize Him instantly by His appearance. He did look somewhat different than He did before.

Mary was talking to a recognizable human being, but she thought it was the gardener, even after He spoke briefly to her. Then, this man spoke her name, and she immediately knew it was Jesus. He apparently looked somewhat different than He did before He died. His voice probably was a little different. However, for some reason, when He spoke her name, she immediately was able to recognize Him.

Likewise, when we first arrive in Heaven, we will look somewhat different than we do on earth. However, our loved ones will be able to recognize us by our voices, mannerisms, and other personality characteristics. How can anyone believe our loving Heavenly Father would arrange for us to die and go to Heaven and not be recognized by our loved ones?

The disciples recognized Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, although they had never met them.

Luk 9:28-33 *Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying.*

In summary, here are some of the characteristics of our Lord’s interim body that we will share with Him.

1. Our Lord’s interim body was recognizable as a human body, Luke 24:39-40, John 20:26-28.

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Luk 24:39-40 *“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.*

Joh 20:26-28 *After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”*

2. His body had substance and could be touched, Luke 24:39-40; John 20:17,26-28; Matthew 28:9.

Mat 28:9 *And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.*

Joh 20:17 *Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.””*

3. He carried on conversations, demonstrating some system of vocal cords and the use of air, Luke 24:39-40, John 20:26.
4. His voice was recognizable, John 20:16.

Joh 20:16 *Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).*

5. His body had flesh and bones, Luke 24:39-40.
6. He ate food, although He certainly did not have to eat, Luke 24:42-43.

Luk 24:42-43 *They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.*

7. He was able to walk through closed doors, John 20:19-20,26.

Joh 20:19-20,26 *So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord... After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.”*

8. His body was able to appear and disappear, Luke 24:31.

Luk 24:31 *Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.*

9. He was not subject to gravity, Acts 1:9-10.

Act 1:9-10 *And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.*

Chapter 5

Now That We've Arrived, What Will We Do for all Eternity?

Believers sometimes wonder what they will be doing in Heaven for all eternity. Well, here is the short answer: We will have so much to be happy about that we will never wonder about what to do next. First and foremost, we will finally be face-to-face with our Lord Jesus Christ. Next, we will be reunited with all of our Christian loved ones who went on to glory before us. And finally, we will begin to form many new relationships with believers from every generation that we meet for the first time in Heaven. We will live in a place that is incredibly beautiful, far beyond anything we can comprehend with our limited earthly frame of reference.

We will be living in our new bodies, which are perfectly healthy and always filled with energy. At our pleasure, we will be able to travel and see the spectacular beauty of Heaven. Many assume that once we enter Heaven, we will automatically become a bland, harp-playing cloud rider, a conventional saint with no distinctive features. Others wonder if life in Heaven will be boring! Nothing could be further from the truth! Our lifestyle in Heaven will be much different than it is on earth. In eternity we will manifest the perfected form of the character we are building today. Christ will remove the sin in our lives, but we will still have those characteristics that make us unique as individuals. This diversity of personality will provide one of the great joys of our future life.

One example of this is seen in the character of Elijah. All his life he fought against evil and idolatry. The prophet Malachi identifies Elijah as one of the two witnesses who will appear to fight against the Anti-Christ and his army during the Tribulation, Malachi 4:5. The resurrected Elijah will manifest the same character he did when he was fighting against King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal.

A magnificent new life awaits us. We did not earn it or deserve it; it is a wonderful gift from God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord said in **Joh 10:10**, *"I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."* **Rom 6:23** says, *"The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This is not a fairy tale; this is a reality! God has arranged everything so that our eternal life in Heaven will be perfectly fulfilling. When God created us, He placed a void inside us that must be filled in order to experience complete happiness, Ecclesiastes 3:11, *"He has also set eternity in their heart."* Right now, with the influence of the old sin nature and Satan and the pull of this world, all of us are kept in some way from experiencing total and complete satisfaction while we are on earth.

However, none of these obstacles will be present in Heaven. All residents of Heaven will love to carry out God's will. As the Lord said in Matthew 5:6, *"Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied."* The hunger and thirst that God put within us when He created us can be satisfied, if we have a strong desire to live our lives according

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to every instruction in the Word of God. Although this condition is difficult to attain and maintain on earth, everyone in Heaven will be completely satisfied because there they will operate completely in God's will.

Heaven is a place where every desire will be met because every desire will always be pure and in line with God's will. When we respect God and hold Him in reverent awe, there is fantastic blessing awaiting us! See what He has promised us in the Psalms:

Psa 20:4 *“He will grant you your heart's desire.”*

Psa 37:4 *“Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”*

Psa 145:19 *“He will fulfill the desire of those who reverently and worshipfully respect Him.”*

Everyone in Heaven will hold God in reverent awe at all times. And because of this, they will all experience complete fulfillment. In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul talked about the transformation in knowledge that we can eagerly await after our resurrection.

1Co 13:9-13 *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

All the limits on our capacity for knowledge and experience here on earth will be removed. If there are elements in our present life not suitable for us in Heaven, they will be removed. And we will experience the things designed for our benefit on a much higher level. All that is worthwhile in this life will find its highest expression in Heaven.

Another source of gratification will be continued spiritual growth. In Heaven, 1 Corinthians 13:12 will be a reality: *“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then **face to face**; now I know in part, but then **I shall know fully** just as I also have been fully known.”* Great satisfaction comes from continually studying and meditating upon the Word of God. The more we understand about God's ways, the more we hunger for His Word. God reveals a great deal of spiritual truth to us while we are on earth, but there also is a great deal that will be revealed to us in eternity, Deuteronomy 29:29, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us.”* In Heaven, there will be nothing that God holds back from us! Imagine what it will be like to use 100% of the incredibly powerful brain God gave us instead of using only the 3% to 10% that most of us utilize today! We will be able to do anything and learn many things about the universe that are simply beyond our grasp here on earth. There is nothing that we will desire to know that we will not learn. Study and meditation upon the Word of God will reach its culmination in the eternal state.

In addition to experiencing continued spiritual revelation from God; we will also have duties to perform in Heaven. We will not just sit around on clouds playing harps and singing—the Word of God says we will do Him holy service!

Rev 22:3-4 *And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on*

their foreheads.

Everyone in Heaven will experience great joy doing the work God asks them to do. Our lives will be magnificent from the first moment we arrive and throughout eternity. Every one of us will experience great happiness, worth, satisfaction, and accomplishment.

Heaven will also be filled with the magnificent sounds of praise. Everyone in Heaven will realize they are there only because God was willing to sacrifice His only Son and because the Lord Jesus Christ was willing to pay the price for our sins. None of us will have the slightest doubt why we are there and who is responsible for our being able to enjoy the magnificence of Heaven. More than ever before, we will realize that praise and thanksgiving is due to our Lord. Our hearts will be so filled with gratitude that we will not be able to refrain from expressing it through a continual manifestation of praise. Everyone in Heaven will love praising the Lord. Our admiration will pour continually out of our mouths; no one will hold back or be reserved. When the Apostle John was taken to Heaven, he gave this description of the activity before the throne of God.

Rev 5:11-13 *And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads [ten thousand times ten thousand], and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” And every created thing which is in Heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”*

Ten thousand multiplied by ten thousand is one hundred million people. We do not know for certain whether this is figurative speech or whether there actually will be that many people surrounding the throne of God.

On another occasion, John again referred to the tremendous number of people assembled around throne of God. He said there were so many people they could not be counted.

Rev 7:9 *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.*

Most of us have seen an athletic stadium in person or on television that can hold nearly 100,000 people. The crowds in those stadiums will be minuscule in comparison with the multitude surrounding the throne of God. And even though most of us will be far from the throne, our eyesight and hearing in Heaven will be so spectacular that it will seem as if we are right next to the throne. Someday you and I will actually be part of a crowd of people from every nation on earth standing in awe before the throne of God. We will all speak out boldly as we give thanks to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev 7:10-12 *And they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might,*

be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

When we approach the throne of God, we will be overwhelmed by the magnitude of praise. When John described his visit to Heaven, he said something very interesting in Revelation 19:1, “*After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in Heaven, saying, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.’*”

Surrounding the throne of God are the thrones of the twenty-four elders. This is taught in Revelation 4:4, “*And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.*” These elders represent winners from the Church-age. The Lord Jesus Christ will be seated in the center of a circle consisting of the thrones of the members of this court. Each of these elders will play a stringed instrument, Revelation 5:8, “*And the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp.*” They will lead the tremendous crowd of people in songs of praise to God and His wonderful Son. From time to time, one of them will speak out to urge the people to praise God boldly, Revelation 19:5, “*And a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.’*” And the response to this request will be louder than anything we have ever heard, Revelation 19:6, “*And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.’*”

John’s observance of the sounds of Heaven was echoed by the Apostle Paul, who said in the 2 Corinthians 12:2 (*Living Bible* translation), “*Fourteen years ago I was taken up to Heaven for a visit. Don’t ask me whether my body was there or just my spirit, for I don’t know; only God can answer that. But anyway, there I was in paradise, and I heard things so astounding that they are beyond a man’s power to describe or put in words (and anyway I am not allowed to tell them to others). That experience is something worth bragging about, but I am not going to do it.*” Paul was unable to put this experience adequately into words. His inability to express what he heard is similar to trying to describe color to a blind person or sound to a deaf person. It is impossible to use earthly words to describe what we will hear in Heaven.

Here on earth we cannot fully comprehend the immensity of God. His glory is beyond human comprehension. But everyone in the New Jerusalem will be fully conscious of His eminence. Everyone in Heaven will long to praise Him. As Psalm 48:1 says, “*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.*”

Along with spending much of our time in Heaven praising and thanking God, we will also be able to play many kinds of musical instruments. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will play the trumpet, Zechariah 9:14. Heavenly orchestras will continually play indescribably beautiful concerts, and we will all marvel at the quality of the music. It will be far greater than the finest music we have ever heard on earth. Every person in Heaven will welcome the opportunity to praise the Lord in every possible way with the words we speak, the songs we sing, and the instruments we will be playing. Heaven will resound continually with magnificent sounds of praise.

The Bible describes our life in the resurrection as a life of pure joy, worship, and purposeful activity. We will have all the good things that the Lord created for Adam and the Woman, and none of the bad things like sin, pain, worry, or death. Can you imagine what a joy life will be in Heaven when we will be able to work in harmony with God to complete His purposes? There will be no misunderstandings, no sins of pride, no gossip, and no violence. With all eternity before us, we shall be able to explore all the gifts and talents that God gave us. In Heaven, with all eternity before us,

every interest and gift of God can be utilized and explored; we will be able to develop all the tremendous potential that God has given to every one of us. We shall not have regrets in Heaven for the loss of anything that has enduring value.

Chapter 6

Questions and Answers Concerning Heaven

We are now going to answer some commonly asked questions regarding Heaven.

Q: When the Bible talks about Heaven being a place of rest, how does that relate to the activity in Heaven?

A: Heaven is the last frontier, as it were, and like other frontiers in human history, it will challenge us with new opportunities, possibilities, and experiences. Unlike the previous frontiers on Earth, Heaven will be unlimited in time and space. It will inspire us to join as participants in the dynamic, creative plans of Jesus Christ as we embark on a greater adventure than any we have ever dreamed of. We will be able to explore the infinite possibilities of an unlimited universe.

Our future blessings in Heaven will begin with the ending of all evil, suffering, and adversity, but it will also provide the fulfillment and enhancement of all the real joys and happiness of human life. The important thing to realize is that the Bible describes our rest after our labor on earth, but these passages do not suggest a life of inactivity or boredom. The promises are of an active, purposeful, and joyful life in a creation filled with beauty, fairness, and justice.

Q: Will there be any animals in Heaven?

A: There is an interesting passage in the book of Isaiah concerning how creation will be transformed into a worldwide Garden of Eden. This passage talks about the Millennium and then also the eternal state, Isaiah 65:17, “*For behold, I create new Heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.*” And then in Isaiah 65:25, “*‘The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,’ says the Lord.*” We will no longer fear the violence of animals.

Also, through Revelation 19:11-14 we know there are horses in Heaven, “*And I saw Heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in Heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.* So the answer is “Yes,” there are animals in Heaven.

Q: Will there be such a thing as time in Heaven?

A: Some theologians have taught that there is no time in Heaven, but they do not understand the original language of the verse that they quote. The *King James* translation says in Revelation 10:6, “*And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven, and the things that therein*

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are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.” However, this is a mistranslation. As the *New American Standard* says in Revelation 10:6, “*And swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created Heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer*”; the *New International Version* and the *New King James* say the same.

We must also look at Revelation 22:1-2, “*And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.*” The Tree of Life will yield “twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month,” which shows that we shall still enjoy the taste of various kinds of fruit. And the mention of months shows that the continuation of months and seasons will go on in Heaven to provide some variety of climates in our new home.

Q: Will we have to wear clothes in Heaven or will we be naked like our original parents?

A: Revelation 7:9 states that we shall be clothed with white robes to symbolize the righteousness of God: “*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.*”

Q: Ecclesiastes 9:10 seems to say that there is no activity beyond the grave, how does this relate to Heaven? (*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.*)

A: There have been many preachers who have taught what is called “soul sleep.” Some teach that when a person dies, their soul sleeps until the judgment day. However, the Bible teaches that the soul does not sleep at death, and neither is it “annihilated.” The body is described as “sleeping” in a sense because it rests until God resurrects it into a new immortal and incorruptible form for eternity. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11:30, “*For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*” This is a reference to the body sleeping, not the soul. The Bible never speaks of the soul as sleeping. The clear teaching of Scripture is that Christians immediately join Christ in Heaven once we die (as in 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21-23). In confirmation of this interpretation, in the final chapter of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon affirms the different destiny of the soul as opposed to the body, Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, “*Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*”

When the thief on the cross turned in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, he said in Luke 23:42-43, “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!*” And He said to him, “*Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*” Here is the clearest possible statement that the soul passes immediately from consciousness in this life to a conscious existence in Heaven. The Lord also taught His disciples that the rich man who died in sin was totally conscious, not only of his torment, but also of his brothers who were in danger of hell.

Luk 16:20-31 “*And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the*

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dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:8, “*We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be face to face with the Lord.*” Also, several Old Testament passages speak of death as sleep and Sheol as a condition of unconsciousness, but each time the passage refers to the body, not the soul.

Q: Are there any churches or Temples in Heaven?

A: There are no churches or temples as we know them on earth because there will not be any need for a church building in Heaven. Here on earth, a church building is a place where we gather in the name of the Lord to worship Him. We will not have to go to a building to do this in Heaven because the Lord's presence will be there continually.

Rev 21:22 *And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.*

Q: Do people in Heaven know what is taking place on earth?

A: No. Heaven would not be Heaven if our loved ones knew what was happening on earth. However, when we arrive in Heaven, we will very likely find that certain people there interceded for us in prayer while we were going through difficult times on earth. Everyone in Heaven wants everyone on earth to experience the manifestation of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q: Will people get married in Heaven?

A: No one will marry in Heaven. Marriage is an earthly institution.

Luk 20:27-36 *Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he is childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up offspring to his brother. Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; and the second and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children.*

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Finally the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

Q: Where will the Gazebo be in Heaven?

A: Remember that the winner has special privileges related to the Tree of Life and the Gazebo of the Garden, called the Paradise of God. The winner is a member of a special club with special parties to which they are invited, a member of the Paradise Club forever, **Rev 2:7, 22:14**.

Rev 2:7 *"To the winner, I will give to him the privilege of eating from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God."*

Rev 22:14 *"Blessed are they [winners] who have washed their robes [rebound], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city [new Jerusalem]."*

The Gazebo is located in the New Jerusalem, not on the New Earth. The exact location in the New Jerusalem is not mentioned.

Q: Why will there be no sea in Heaven?

A: The sea was actually used by God as a prison for the fallen angels.

Rev 20:11-13 *And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and Heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.*

Verse 13 is not talking about people who drowned in the sea, nor is it talking about people who are buried in the sea. It is talking about the sea as the most powerful set of gates ever used for a prison! The word for sea is *thalassa*, which refers to the floodwaters of the universal flood where those fallen angels are imprisoned. This is why Revelation 21:1 tells us that there is no more sea in the new Heaven and the new earth: *"And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth; for the first Heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea."* It is interesting to note that when God restored the earth in Genesis 1, He said everything He did was good except when He separated the sea, and that is because this caused the fallen angels to be released from prison.

Q: What does the Bible mean when it talks about the final days being like the days of Noah?

A: The Lord said in Matthew 24:34-39, *"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But*

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of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”

It is possible that our Lord is pointing to something here which is much more immense than what we know. The days of Noah were characterized by the Nephilim, Genesis 6:4, *“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God [fallen angels] came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”* The Living Bible translation says in Gen 6:4, *“In those days, and even afterwards, when the evil beings from the spirit world were sexually involved with human women, their children became giants, of whom so many legends are told.”* This is actually a description of the days of Noah and why God destroyed the ancient world with a flood. There will be super-creatures on this earth, and Satan will need a way to explain their presence. He might say they are visitors from another planet, but in reality they are his fallen angels. Remember what our Lord said about His second coming in Matthew 24:4, *“Let no one deceive you!”*

Q: Could the current cloning be a corruption of pure human genetics like the Nephilim were back then?

A: It is quite likely that the cloning system currently being developed will be used by Satan in some way to do what he always does—deceive the whole world.

Q: If an unbeliever has been given 24 hours to live and has no clue about the Lord Jesus Christ or Heaven or even “sin,” and a pastor comes in to speak with this unbeliever and is then said to have made “peace with his God,” is he saved?

A: There is no such thing as a person who has no clue about the Lord Jesus Christ, John 1:9, *“There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”*

Rom 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

If a person says, “I have made peace with God,” it better be through the Lord Jesus Christ, Ephesians 2:14, *“For He Himself is our peace.”*

Joh 14:6 *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”*

Q: Since Satan is still allowed to go to Heaven, if we die today, will we be able to see him or any other fallen angels?

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A: Yes! We will be able to see him according to Job 1:6-7, “*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’*” In Job 2:1-2, “*Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. The LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’*”

It appears that Satan will have access to Heaven until that time when he is forever banished, Revelation 12:7-9, “*And there was war in Heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in Heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*”

Q: How will we be able to talk to one another with a universal language if we have different nations?

A: The same way the languages were scattered in Genesis 11, they will be brought back together. When God created the earth, there was only one language.

Gen 11:1-9 *Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. [However, as so often happens, pride caused a problem. The citizens of the city of Babylon tried to build a tower on earth that would actually reach Heaven.] And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into Heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” [God was not pleased with this carnal desire to reach Heaven by human power.] And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.*

If the Lord was able to confuse the one language spoken at that time, He certainly can do the opposite in Heaven.

Q: Will we see the Father?

A: We know that the Father has a throne in Heaven, so we have to see something.

Rev 3:21 “*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*”

Job 19:26 *“Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.”*

Mat 5:8 *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

Q: What is the difference between fallen angels and demons?

A: There are two different opinions on this. One is that they are one and the same. The other is that the demons are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim.

Q: In all that we are learning about the beauty and wonder of Heaven, if the stress of this world drives a believer to take his life, so that he may not hurt anymore, but experience this greatness in Heaven, does taking His life cancel his ticket to Heaven?

A: No. If a person is born again, he can do nothing that would cause him to lose his salvation. And, if a person is born again, he has the available power to handle all stress in life. If a believer commits suicide, he is guaranteed to be a loser in Heaven for all eternity.

This concludes our study on Heaven. Remember, our attitude about Heaven affects our spiritual life here on earth. Do not be reluctant to learn all you can about the future home of believers; it can only help you to grow and prosper. But always keep in mind that there is no crown without the cross. So pick up your cross daily, knowing that God loves you with an infinite love and has prepared a magnificent future for you. A future without end.