

After: Eternity is for Real

What Happens After a Person Dies in Christ - Revelation 21-22

Intro. We've been in a series dealing with Eternity and what happens after we die. We know that God has put eternity in our hearts, that death is appointed to everyone, and when a person dies, they do not lose consciousness but their soul goes immediately into the presence of God in Heaven or their souls go immediately into the torments of Hell. Last week, we looked at the reason for Hell and the realities of Hell, as the answer to What Happens After a Person Dies Without Christ.

Today, we will be looking at What Heaven is Now and What Heaven Will Be for Eternity as the answer to What Happens After a Person Dies in Christ. ----- I think it is very important as we dive into this critical subject that we clearly define what it means to be **IN Christ**, since we are saying that Heaven is the home of those who die in Christ. **What do we mean? 2 Cor. 5:17 says, "If any person is in Christ..."**. This is a work of grace, not of any good you have done. In fact, your first glimpse of Heaven will reveal how utterly unworthy we are and how impossible it was to every think that in a million lifetimes of living an absolutely perfect life, you could ever deserve to be there! But, that in Christ, we have a home as a pure gift of His grace!

To be IN CHRIST means you have been **CHOSEN** by God, **ADOPTED** in His family through faith in Christ, **REDEEMED** through His blood, **FORGIVEN** by God's grace, **PROMISED** an inheritance, **BELIEVED** in Christ through the Word of His gospel, and **SEALED** by the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of your inheritance until the day you step into Heaven. You follow Him, you live for Him, and you forsake all others for only Him...Your life is **Psalm 73:25-26 "Whom am I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever!"**

1 Cor. 2:9-10 "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit." – What we can know about Heaven has been revealed to us though His Word with the help of the Holy Spirit.

It is amazing how much misinformation is out there and sheer fantasy or wishful thinking is out there! It's equally amazing how many Christians you talk to who secretly dread going to Heaven because they think Heaven will be some sort of eternal church service! @ **David Lloyd George**, "When I was a boy, the thought of Heaven used to frighten me more than the thought of Hell. I pictured Heaven as a place where time would be perpetual Sundays, with perpetual services from which there would no escape." Other people are like this **Far Side Comic** (Man on a cloud with halo and wings looking around) "Wish I had Brought a Magazine!"

C.S. Lewis: "Most of us find it very difficult to want "Heaven" at all-except in so far as 'Heaven' means meeting again our friends who have died. One reason for this difficulty is that we have not been trained: our whole education tends to fix our minds on this world. Another reason is that when the real want for heaven is present in us, we do not recognize it." Lewis went on to say, "If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles...who set foot on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither." – Today, we want to fix our minds on things above (not to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good), but that we are so heavenly minded that we become of greater earthly good!

I. **Heaven Now** – Luke 16:22 “The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side...and now, he is comforted.”

- A. **The Intermediate State** - Heaven now is being in the comforting, immediate and eternal presence of Jesus Christ, no longer under the Curse of sin – Phil. 1:23 “my desire is to depart and be with Christ” – The intermediate state is NOT our final home, but a stop over until the resurrection of our glorified bodies built for a resurrected Earth.
- B. **In the present Heaven, we will be enjoying the presence of Christ, but also looking forward to being reunited with our glorified body and permanent home.** With Jesus forever, but on our way to our eternal home! @ Randy Alcorn describes Heaven Now as a stop-over. Living in homeless shelter in Miami, inherited a new home in Santa Barbara but flying through Dallas to meet up with friends and family before departing for Santa Barbara (or returning to a newly renovated Miami without the crime, sin or poverty of the old life).
- C. **The Present Heaven, the Place we call Heaven is God’s creation, but not God Himself.** God is eternal and self-existent. He has created all things: Gen. 1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”; Col. 1:16 “For by Christ all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him.” This is why we read in Rev. 21:1 God creating a new heaven and new earth.
- D. **In Heaven Now, those who die are in the angelic realm with the Lord, but in the Eternal Heaven, God will bring Heaven down to a New Earth where He will dwell with us.** Wherever God dwells with His people is Heaven. Now, believers who have died in Christ are with the Lord in the New Jerusalem which will come down out of Heaven to the New Earth (Rev. 21:1-3).
 - Isaiah 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered.” (Speaking of sin’s influence and reign on earth)
 - 2 Pet. 3:13 According to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”
 - Rev. 21:3 we see a joining of Heaven and Earth together.

II. **Heaven Eternal** – Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God...”.

A. **What Eternal Heaven is NOT**

1. Eternal Heaven is NOT a place where sin is found – Rev. 21:8 “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion shall be in the lake that burns with fire.” Can you imagine a world like that? Can you imagine a world where we will not sin, or not even have the want to, to sin? A place where sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, witchcraft, fighting, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, politics (had to throw that one in), envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these will permanently be replaced with an endless supply of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control! –

Jonathan Edwards said, “Even the very best of men, are, on earth, imperfect. But it is not so in heaven. There shall be no pollution or deformity or offensive defect of any kind, seen in any person or thing; but every one shall be perfectly pure, and perfectly lovely in heaven.”

2. Eternal Heaven is NOT a place that will be boring! Ps. 16:11 “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Mark Buchanan, *Things Unseen*, “Why won’t we be bored in heaven? Because it’s the one place where both impulses-to go beyond, to go home-are perfectly joined and totally satisfied. It’s the one place where we’re constantly discovering-where everything is always fresh and the possessing of a thing is as good as the pursuing of it- and yet where we are fully at home- where everything is at it ought to be and where we find,

undiminished, that mysterious something we never found down here...And this lifelong melancholy that hangs on us, this wishing we were someone else somewhere else, vanishes too. Our craving to go beyond is always and fully realized. Our yearning for home is once and for all fulfilled. The ahh! of deep satisfaction and the aha! of delighted surprise meet, and they kiss.”

Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, takes it further, “Our belief that Heaven will be boring betrays a heresy – that God is boring. There’s no greater nonsense. Our desire for pleasure and the experience of joy come directly from God’s hand. He made our taste buds, adrenaline, sex drives, and the nerve endings that convey pleasure to our brains. Likewise, our imaginations and our capacity for joy and exhilaration were made by the very God we accuse of being boring. Are we so arrogant to believe that human beings came up with the idea of having fun?”

B. What Eternal Heaven IS – “the dwelling place of God with men” (21:3) Same as John 14. Heaven is not about Mansion envy...Heaven is discovering the wonders of God and His Creation

1. ***The New Jerusalem (21:9-11a; 22-27; 22:1-5)*** – In the OT, the Holy Holies was shaped like a cube where only the High Priest could go; Hebrews describes it as the copy of what is in Heaven. (21:22 No Temple because God will be the Temple!)
 - No temple because Heaven will be the Holy of holies and we will worship our Savior
 - (22:1-2) Tree of Life with the healing of the nations – Picture of what Heaven really is which is “the environment of God’s glory” coming down to us for perpetual healing!
 - **V. 4 - WE SHALL SEE HIS FACE!**
 - No more night...And we shall reign there as priests forever and ever!
 - John gives us this imagery to motivate us to want to see this Earth, this life restored and not to ignore injustice, oppression and evil, but confront it with the Gospel!
2. **Our New Bodies – 1 Cor. 15:51-53** “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

These glorified bodies, like that of Jesus after His resurrection will **Work** without fatigue, **Learn** without limitations, **Relate** without prejudice or judgment, **Eat** Heavenly Food without the tainting of sin (Zaxby’s Grilled Chicken Sandwich with seasoned fries and Sweet Tea with Krispy Kreme Donuts – closest thing). We will **Worship** our Creator with passion and authenticity. **In other words, Heaven will be the continuation of LIFE where we will behold Him in all His beauty and He will, as our King, give us the kingdom to explore, enjoy and serve Him! @ Randy Alcorn says, “Not only will we see His face and live, but we will likely wonder if we ever lived before we saw His face.” Everything we do will be done to the glory of God!! This is the eternal fulfillment of John 10:10 “The thief came to steal, kill and destroy. I came to that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** – In Heaven, the curse is lifted, the enemy is no more and we are raised to uninhibited abundant life in new bodies equipped for eternal life in the New Heaven and Earth (and wherever we might explore throughout God’s creation! @ What will these bodies be like??

John Piper, writes, “In our new glorified bodies, all pain and disease and deformity and disability will be gone. All sin, which so often takes the body for its base of operations, will be gone. And this is not because we will be rid of our bodies but because in a mysterious and wonderfully spiritual way, we will have new and glorious bodies which are capable of touch and smell and taste and hearing and seeing.

God's final purpose for you is not to have your soul or your spirit floating around without your body in some ghost-like mansion in the sky. His purpose for you is to raise your body from the dead and to make it new and beautiful and healthy and strong. His final purpose is not to take you away from the earth to spend eternity in heaven, but to make a new heaven and a new earth where you will live in happiness forever and ever. You will have the best body imaginable, and there will be playing and climbing and swimming and running and jumping and swinging and skiing and roller-skating and skate-boarding and biking and hiking and bouncing and tumbling and hopping — and whatever else you do when you are very, very happy.

So, whenever you think about the future and what you will be doing forever and ever after you die and after Jesus comes back, think about these things. But just remember this: the reason these things are going to make you really happy, and the reason you will never be sad again, is that in all your playing and climbing and swimming and running and jumping and biking and hiking...you are going to be using your bodies to obey God and praise his great and wonderful name. God will be at the center of your life, and that is why you will never be sad again."

Conclusion: Crane and the Swan (describes Heaven) – Crane: "Are there any snails in Heaven?"

What are you living for? If you are living for things here, you will miss Heaven, but if you live for Christ, you will have it all!