

DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN

Summer Sunday School – 2019

CHADRON BEREAN CHURCH

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In putting these notes together, I want to give credit to two men whose studies on heaven were a tremendous asset: Randy Alcorn, from his book called 'Heaven' and Pastor David Thompson's study notes from Texas Corners Bible Church. These notes are a compilation of much of their hard work and my own personal thoughts and studies.

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REASONS TO STUDY THE DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN

- **Reason #1 – It is where our Heavenly Father is!**

Heaven is where our God is and God is what we're all about. God is reason and purpose for everything. He is the One who called everything into existence that is in existence and the One whom everything revolves around and depends on (Col. 1:15-17). He is the Creator and the Sustainer. He is the focal point of heaven and his throne is at the center of it.. The Westminster Confession said it rightly that, "he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things," and, "the chief end of man is **to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**" We were created to worship Him and in heaven, we will worship before Him in His glorious presence. MacArthur wrote, "...a yearning to see God's glory is one of the hallmarks of true belief in him. This, of course, is the single most powerful attraction and the highest reward of heaven: *God's glory is permanently on display there in all its full resplendence.*" In five words, Revelation 22:4 describes this reward well: "They will see His face."

- **Reason #2 – We will spend the majority of our existence there.**

Our time on this earth is like incredibly short but we will spend eternity with God in heaven. It only makes sense that since we will spend eternity there, and since God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecc. 3:11), we would want to know more about it. It's kind of like a missionary going to live in another country: he naturally wants to know more about it and does the research necessary to live there. Heaven is our country.

- James 4:14 – "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."
- Psalm 39:5-6 – "Behold you have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath."
- Psalm 144:4 – "Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow."
- Job – described his days as "swift" and his life as but a mere "breath"
- Jacob – a man who lived 130 years described his years as "few".

- **Reason #3 – It is a major biblical subject.**

God gave us His Word so that we would know what He wants us to know. Heaven is one of those major subjects in His Word. Being the desired destination for souls and the place where God dwells, it is a subject that comes up frequently.

- The word "heaven" is used a total of 604 times (320 – OT, 284 – NT), not including adverbs or other related words like "heavenly".
- It is used in 32 of the 39 Old Testament books.
- It is used in 20 of the 27 New Testament books.
- The final chapters of the Bible describe the destination and delight of heaven as the desired place to be.

- **Reason #4 – The subject of heaven is a neglected subject.**

Most people, including many of God's people, are not very knowledgeable when it comes to the subject of heaven. When most people think of heaven, they think of it vaguely (in comparison to Scripture's testimony of it) or because of some extra-biblical claims they've come across through movies and books, think of it erroneously.

When we speak of heaven or hell as the two destinations for the soul, we are approaching the subject very vaguely (many times on purpose). For instance, in evangelism, we don't always sense the need to speak about the details of a coming Millennial Kingdom or the New Jerusalem on the New Heaven and New Earth. We speak in basic terms of heaven or hell. When we speak of hell, we don't always need to need to speak in detail about how hell as it is right now is a temporary location in Sheol we call Hades, some demons have a place called the Abyss, and how eventually every unbeliever, demon and Hades itself will be thrown into the ultimate destination known as the Lake of Fire. Most don't distinguish between Hell and Hades and the Lake of Fire and we don't always have too, but it is important to God's people to understand these things to come and have be able to give intelligent responses in defending the faith. Many believers, however, have never heard of such detailed differences in eternal destinies. They simply know the biblical after-life as heaven or hell and heaven as a place where we go to get angel wings and lay on clouds, playing golden harps or hell as a place where Satan rules and they party with their friends.

The result of the subject of heaven being approached vaguely has no doubt has played a part in it being approached erroneously by the majority of the world. People have all sorts of crazy ideas about what heaven is like and what we will do there and a lot of it just based on peoples' untrustworthy opinions, dreams and near-death experiences. Because of these faulty sources, many have come to false conclusions that heaven is just a mystical, out of body experience where everyone goes.

One unfortunate reality leading to its neglect is that many assume there isn't a lot written about heaven in the Bible and so they don't even try to study the subject. On top of that, on an increasing scale, many churches don't have pastors or teachers who are willing to study doctrines of the Bible systematically anymore. Serious, systematic studies of the Scripture and doctrines is often replaced with short, philosophical and ear-tickling devotional messages or motivational speeches that make people feel good about themselves and entertain them for a little bit. Randy Alcorn, in his book called "Heaven", said that a pastor told him he got depressed when he thought of heaven because he could stand the endless tedium of floating around on clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp (p. 5-6). You don't get that view of heaven from the Scriptures. But Alcorn rightly suggesting from experience, says many pastors even haven't had a whole lot of teaching on heaven because when you study eschatology (end times doctrine) in seminary or Bible school, the teachers often get behind. They discuss Israel and the Church, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and by the time they're done with those, not a lot of time is left for discussing the New Heaven and New Earth (Alcorn, pg. 9), For lack of proper attention, heaven is a subject that should be studied systematically.

➤ **Systematic study is instinctive.**

Whenever any teacher, of any subject, goes to teach that subject, they naturally approach it systematically. They naturally plan out their teachings in an organized and logical order. Why wouldn't we approach the Scriptures this way? Before we learn how to read, we have to know our ABC's. Before we learn how to multiply and divide, we learn to do simpler things like adding and subtracting. Whenever you build anything, you have a blueprint or instructions to follow (foundation, walls, plumbing, wiring, drywalling). That's the way our mind works. We learn most things in a progressive, orderly format. Systematically studying heaven will bring knowledge and clarity and order to our idea of heaven.

➤ **Systematic study is mandated.**

We are told to rightly divide the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 4:1-4). God's people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge of God's Word (Isaiah 28:9-10; Hosea 4:6-7). Probably the greatest hindrance keeping people back and from stepping out to serve Christ with their lives is that they don't have a working knowledge of the Scriptures. How do you make disciples if you don't know what you believe? We want to be skilled in handling God's Word. We want to know what we believe and why we believe it.

Isaiah 28:9-10

During the days of Isaiah, some Israelites would rather sit under the uncontrolled, disorderly, frenzied preaching of a drunken priest or prophet who had 'visions' from God, than sit under the orderly, verse by verse instruction from Isaiah as he expounded God's Word. The false ministry of the priests was that of "*God is telling me this!*" or "*God is telling me that!*" which was way more exciting and entertaining than studying what God had already said, so they neglected the written Word, exchanging it for something shallow. At one point in time Israel even strayed so far from the Word that they lost track of it entirely, that is, until it was 'rediscovered' in the Temple during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kings 22).

This neglect of approaching God's Word **patiently** and **systematically** left them as spiritual babies who only drank cups of milk and couldn't interpret the meat of the Word. Prophet Isaiah's way of teaching may have been less exciting, but it was no less passionate. It may have been simpler, but it was definitely not easier. It takes more time and just plain hard work in study, preparation and focus to handle God's Word correctly than just standing up in front of people and rambling on. Isaiah's bit by bit, command by command, verse by verse teaching from the Word of God was ridiculed, but would have made them mature in their faith like God wanted and they would have developed a passion for God that went beyond some surface level of excitement.

- **Reason #5 – The well-being of God’s people.**

Studying heaven will bring great peace and comfort and hope to God’s people in a world where death is inevitable. Not only will we face death personally and pass through it (should the Lord tarry), but we also have to deal with it on a consistent basis as friends and loved ones experience it. If we didn’t have any knowledge of heaven and God hadn’t given us His Word, it would be crushing to always wonder what happened to them and where they went when they died. Science, philosophy and religions can offer their *suggestions*, but the Bible gives us real, solid and true answers. When you think about a loved one dying, it can be very terrifying, but understanding where they’re at gives us hope through that. Yes, we are sad that they are no longer with us but look at what’s on the other side! We can rejoice that they’re in heaven and we can look forward to going there ourselves one day.

- **Reason #6 – It promotes godliness in our lives.**

We are instructed more than once to fix our minds on the things above and not merely on earth (Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:19-21, 25-33). When we think about heaven and our going there one day, we begin to see heaven as more of our home and this earth as something temporary, and it is. 1 Peter 3:10-11 teaches that we should be people of holy conduct and godliness based upon the fact that we know this world is going to dissolve by being burned up and melted with intense heat. Studying future things has a purifying effect on us. And why live for a world that is going to be burned up and replaced but lose your soul? We should live on this earth with an eye to the New Heaven and New Earth that is to come. Studying heaven gives us a proper perspective of this life and how we ought to live now, making the most of opportunity we have, so that we will have the fullest experience of heaven and heavenly rewards in the life to come (1 John 3:3; Col. 4:5).

- **Reason #7 – Heaven is awesome!**

The purpose of studying future things is not to just feed curiosity and peak our interests, but you certainly can’t just rule that out! We want to know more about our eternal home! It’s encouraging and inspires hope to think about what is waiting for us on the other side. This study is going to remind us that the “*good ole’ days*” haven’t even started yet and we have something to look forward too.

- **A warning to those studying the subject of heaven:**

We have to remember that the centerpiece of heaven is God’s throne and the focal point is His glory. It’s all about Him. There are preachers out there today who call themselves “kingdom preachers.” They are known for putting all of the focus on heaven and paradise and trying to win people to *the kingdom* instead of *the King*. I’ve even heard it argued that we are not doing right by preaching Christ because Christ is “*only the door to the kingdom*” and we need to preach the kingdom instead of Christ because it’s more appealing to people. Paul, however, preached Christ and Him crucified and if you don’t want Christ, then you don’t want heaven. Some of these Kingdom preachers lead people to want the blessings of God without really wanting God Himself. There is a danger in studying the subject of heaven in that we can get so caught up in seeking after heaven that we forget to seek the One whom heaven is all about. It’s all about God. He is not the

rewarder of those who just seek heaven, but the rewarded of those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). **We want the King more than we want the kingdom.**

There is also a danger in assuming you automatically go to Heaven. It is possible to study Heaven and not know how to get there. We know that it is **by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**. We trust in Him who died for us so that we could live as He lives in Heaven.

THE TYPES OF “HEAVEN”

The Hebrew word for “heaven” (shamayim) means “the heights.” The Greek word for “heaven” (ouranos) means “raised up” or “lofty”. The Bible uses the word ‘heaven’ in three ways:

- **The 1st Heaven – Atmospheric.**
This is referring to the atmosphere which surrounds the earth and supports life. It extends about six miles high and is known as the troposphere. It is a real place. (Gen. 7:11-12; Deut. 28:12; Psalm 19:1; Is. 55:9-11)
- **The 2nd Heaven – Stellar.**
This is referring to the planetary environment beyond earth’s atmosphere in space, where the sun, moon and stars are located. It also is a real place. (Gen. 1:14-17; Psalm 8:3-4)
- **The 3rd Heaven – Abode of God.**
This is referring to the place **where God dwells (2 Cor. 12:1-4; Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 10:12)**. Just like the first two heavens which can be seen and are real places, so it is with the third heaven. It is a real, spatial place and real location which can be seen if God allows it to be.

God has allowed some men to see heaven or heavenly things and recorded it in the Bible.

A. ISAIAH – A GLIMPSE OF THE LORD SITTING ON HIS THRONE. (Is. 6:1-9)

Context: Judgment on Judah **before** the Babylonian Exile and the commissioning of Isaiah as prophet.

1. He is described as lofty and exalted with the train of His robe filling the temple. (v. 1)
2. Seraphim (angelic agents) stood above Him having six wings; two for his face, two for his feet, and two with which to fly. (v. 2)
3. The Seraphim repeat a three-fold, Trinitarian chant about God’s holiness, being set apart from everything else. (v. 3)
4. The Lord’s voice is often described as loud and earth shaking. (v. 4)
5. Isaiah recognizes his own sinfulness, especially his unclean lips. (v. 5)
6. Seraphim touch his lips with a coal from the altar and his iniquity is taken away and sins forgiven. (v. 7)
7. The Lord seeks the prophet to be His voice to a disobedient people until they are exiled for their increasingly hardened hearts to the message of repentance. (v. 8-13)

B. EZEKIEL – A GLIMPSE OF GOD AND THE WHEELS OF HIS THRONE. (Ezek. 1:1-3:27)

Context: Judgment on Judah **during** the Babylonian Exile and the commissioning of Ezekiel as prophet.

1. The heavens were opened to Ezekiel and he saw visions of God. (1:1)
2. Ezekiel describes the presence of God as a storm cloud with wind, fire flashing continually (lightning), bright light, and glowing metal in the midst of the fire (1:4,

- 14). This is a similar storm description as with the presence on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19:16 and throne in Revelation 4.
3. Within the cloud are four living beings with human form. Each have four faces with four wings and straight legs. Their feet are like a calf's hoof and they gleam like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. Wherever they went, following the spirit, they did not turn and two of their wings touched while two covered their bodies. Their wings are loud, like the voice of the Almighty or an army camp. Each had the face of a man, lion, bull and eagle. In their midst were coals burning coals of fire darting around (1:5-14).
 4. One wheel is on the earth for each living being; four wheels. The wheels all have the same form, one within another and move with turning. In appearance, the wheels are awesome, like sparkling beryl, having eyes round about. The wheels move and rise with the beings and the being with the spirit. Whenever they stand still, their wings drop. Above the living beings is an expanse, awesome in appearance like crystal (1:15-24).
 5. God's voice appears to be coming from above the expanse, where God's throne is. The throne is high up and one on it resembled a man. He looked like glowing metal from the loins upward and fire from the loins downward with a rainbow-like radiance all around Him. This is the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
 6. God's presence cause Ezekiel to fall on his face. God's Spirit entered him and set him on his feet. He was then called and commissioned to speak God's Word to hard hearts and encourage them that restoration was coming (1:28-3:27). Things were not out of control, but God was still on His sovereign chariot, using Babylon as a tool to chastise His disobedient people.

C. DANIEL – A GLIMPSE OF THE HEAVENLY COURT IN SESSION. (Dan. 7:9-14)

Context: the Great Tribulation Judgment.

1. Throne were set up and the Ancient of Days (God the Father) takes His seat with which to judge. (Ps. 29:10)
2. He is described in human terms as white in vesture and hair, symbolizing purity and maturity.
3. His throne is ablaze with flame and its wheels with burning fire.
4. A river of fire flows out from before Him. (Ps. 97:2-3)
5. He is attended by innumerable numbers of beings.
6. The court is in session and books are opened. (vv. 9-10)
7. The beasts (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome/Anti-Christ) are judged and their kingdoms are temporarily ended. The Father then sets up His kingdom through the Son of Man (Christ) returning. (vv. 11-14)

D. JOHN – A GLIMPSE OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST (Rev. 1:9-20)

Context: Christ **judging** the seven churches.

1. John describes himself as being in the Spirit on the Lord's day on the island of Patmos where he was exiled.
2. He turns to the voice speaking with him and sees Christ in his vision. Christ is surrounded by seven golden lampstands (churches). He has a robe reaching to His feet and a golden sash across His chest. His head and hair are described as white as

wool or snow (purity and maturity). His eyes are described as a flame of fire (judgment). His feet are described as burnished bronze in a furnace. His voice is like that of many waters. He holds the seven stars in His right hand (angels-messengers) and out of His mouth comes a sharp, two-edged sword (severity and power of the His words).

3. John, like others, fall at His feet like a dead man. Christ encourages him not to be afraid, but to write God's message.

E. JOHN – A GLIMPSE OF THE HEAVENLY COURT PRE-TRIBULATION. (Rev. 4 & 5)

Context: Preparing for the Great Tribulation **Judgment**.

1. John saw a door standing open in heaven and heard a voice like a trumpet calling him up there to show him future things. He immediately was in the Spirit and went. (4:1)
2. In heaven he saw a throne and one sitting on it. His appearance was a reddish color (beryl, jasper), similar to Ezekiel's burnished and glowing metal colors.
3. There is a rainbow around the throne, similar to Ezekiel as well, but this time it is described as emerald (green) in appearance.
4. 24 elders are around the throne on their own thrones. They are sitting, clothed in white and have golden crowns on their heads (they could be the 12 apostles and 12 sons of Israel, a ruling class of angels, or represent the raptured Church).
5. The presence of God on the throne is again described as a thunderous storm with lightning.
6. Seven lamps of fire are burning and a sea of glass, like crystal, is before it (expanse?).
7. At the center and around the throne are four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind (symbolizing omnipresence and omniscience). They look like a lion, a calf, a man and an eagle. Each has six wings, full of eyes around and within and they do not cease to praise the Holy Trinity.
8. When the four living beings give glory and honor and thanks, the elders fall down in worship and cast their crowns before the throne, worshipping as well.
9. Later, Christ takes the book of tribulation judgments from Him who sits on the throne (the Father).
10. The prayers of the saints are represented.
11. In these two chapters (4-5) there are 5 praise-filled moments

F. MICAIAH – A GLIMPSE OF THE LORD SOVEREIGNLY WORKING. (1 Ki. 22:19-23)

Context: **Judgment** on Ahab

1. Micaiah sees the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by.
2. The Lord, seeking judgment on Ahab (21:25-26), permits deceiving spirits to entice him.
3. The account shows the Lord is clearly sovereign over the affairs of men and nations.

G. STEPHEN – A GLIMPSE OF THE SON OF GOD FROM EARTH. (Acts 7:54-60)

Context: Stephen's **indictment** on the unbelieving Jews.

1. From earth, while being stoned, Stephen gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
2. The heavens opened up for him and he called for the Lord to receive his spirit while being stoned. He asks the Lord to forgive them and then fell asleep. God can make Heaven visible from earth.

H. PAUL – A GLIMPSE OF PARADISE. (2 Cor. 12:1-4)

Context: Paul foolishly having to boast to defend his apostleship by sharing his vision. May have occurred during a similar persecution as Stephen's. (Acts 14:19-20)

1. Paul says he has had visions and revelation of the Lord.
2. Ashamedly speaking in third person, he recounts being caught up somehow to heaven fourteen years before.
3. He saw Paradise and heard inexpressible words which a man is not permitted to speak.

THE “HEAVENS” TO COME

The Heaven where people are right now who have passed on to eternity is not the only place that is considered “heaven” in the Bible and is not the only place where people will go to spend the rest of eternity. The Bible goes beyond the current place known as Heaven and describes, in incredible detail, what the future “heavenly” places will be like. They are known as the Millennial Kingdom and the New Heaven and New Earth with a New Jerusalem. We actually know more about the future Millennial Kingdom and future New Jerusalem than we know about the current state of Heaven. However, the descriptions of these places are often spiritualized and confused with the present heavens where believers go now. These differentiations will clear up the more we progress through this study.

- **The Millennial Kingdom**

The word ‘utopia’ is often defined as “paradise” or “heaven on earth”. Many people have desired this world to be in a utopian environment where everything is perfect and I believe God has set that in our hearts for a reason – Eden was perfect and we want that back! There is a Utopian desire in every philosophy (New Agers, Nazis, ISIS, social gospel). Though the Bible never explicitly uses the word utopia, it does speak of a coming time period on this very earth that will be a utopia, or a “heaven on earth” experience. It is commonly referred to as the Millennial Kingdom. It gets its name from the idea that it will last 1,000 years, which is one millennium.

➤ Rev. 20:1-9

This earth has a very exciting future, but it will not come without the divine intervention. At the great and glorious Second Coming of Christ, He comes to rule the world for 1,000 years from His earthly throne in Jerusalem.

- Jerusalem will be **raised** and remain on its site as a worship center for the world and the nation that does not go up to worship will be punished. (Zech. 14)
- Christ will reign as glorious King of the world and **all** will know Him. (Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 14:9; Hab. 2:14)
- Christ will reign as the Perfect Judge. There will be no more unsolved mysteries or **political** chaos. (Is. 9:6; 32:1-4; 16-17; Matt. 19:28)
- An increasing stream of living waters will flow from the Temple to the east and west making saltwater **fresh** and giving abundant health and quantity to fish and vegetation, which tree leaves will heal. (Zech. 14:8; Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47:1-12)
- With the curse on creation **lifted** (not totally removed), the animal kingdom will live in peace. (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25)
- Vegetation and farming will be very **productive**. (Is. 30:23-26, 35:7, 51:3; Amos 9:13-15)
- Joy and gladness will **abound** while weeping and crying won't. (Is. 65:17-19)
- Humanity will experience unmatched **health** and livelihood. (Isaiah 35:5-6, 65:20-22)
- Fellowship with the Lord will be **enhanced**. (Is. 65:24)

- War will not be an issue as disobedience is dealt with **swiftly**, individually and nationally. (Is. 2:1-4; 60:12; Zech. 14:16-19)
- Satan will be **bound** during this time and **released** for a short period of time to rouse a final rebellion. (Rev. 20:1-3; 7-9)

Millennial Kingdom	Eternal Kingdom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ on the throne. 2. Ruling from sea to sea. 3. Sun and moon more effective. 4. Wicked are present. 5. Satan bound and later released. 6. Child bearing. 7. People die (100 years is young) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Throne of God and of the Lamb. 2. No sea. 3. No need of sun or moon for light. 4. No wickedness whatsoever. 5. Satan is in the lake of fire forever. 6. No child bearing. 7. No more death.

Through studying the Millennial Kingdom age, we understand that God didn't just create this world to abandon it or throw it away when it fell into sin. He is consistently working towards a goal of **restoration** and gave His own Son for it. A biblical vocabulary often uses the words: Reconcile, Redeem, Restore, Recover, Return, Renew, Regenerate, Resurrect. Each word with this re- prefix suggests a coming back to an original state that which has been ruined or lost (Alcorn, 88). He loves to restore things to the original design.

Albert Wolters said, "Redemption is not [only] a matter of an addition of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to creaturely life that was lacking before; rather, it is a matter of bringing new life and vitality to what was there all along.... for the purpose of recovering a sinless creation. (*Creation Regained*, 58-59)"

Following the Millennial Kingdom is a final judgment, typically referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. Here, **non-believers** are resurrected, judged by their deeds and cast into the lake of fire.

➤ Rev. 20:10-15

• The New Heaven and New Earth

Following the Great White Throne Judgment and with the current heaven and earth dissolved by intense **heat**, God will create a New Heaven and a New Earth on which we will dwell with Him perfectly and forever (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13). This is when God will truly wipe every tear away from our eyes and perfect righteousness dwells. There will be no more sin or death or mourning. The New Heaven and Earth is the ultimate and final Heaven we are looking for.

Will the New Earth be brand new or a resurrected one?

There is much debate as to whether the New Earth will be brand new or whether God will reconstruct a New Earth from the old matter dissolved. God certainly has a heart for restoring things so a reconstruction from the old is not out of question. However, God also didn't need any pre-existing material with which to create the present heavens and earth. He powerfully calls things into being which don't exist simply by speaking it into existence. Scripturally, we notice:

- **Revelation 20:11** – states the earth and heaven will **flee away** (*pheugo* – disappear quickly) from God's presence at great white throne and **no place is found for them**.
- **Revelation 21:1** – John sees a **new** heaven and **new** earth, noting that the first heaven and first earth **passed away** (*aperchomai* - literally and physically departed).
- **Two words for new in Greek:** *neos* and *kainos*. *Neos* implies a newness in regard to time (like a used car can be new to you). *Kainos* implies new as in unused (Mt. 9:17; 27:60), new in quality and new in freshness (Mk. 1:27). The latter word, *kainos*, is the word used to describe not only the new heaven and earth, but also our new names (Rev. 2:17), new song (5:9; 14:3), and New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12, 21:22). These would be brand new to us.
- **2 Peter 3:10-14** – The word Peter uses to describe the elements being *destroyed* with intense heat is the word *lyo* (*luo*). *Luo* is most often translated as loosened, released, untied (Rev. 9:14; John 1:27; 10:35; Mt. 21:2). Is Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, referring to the loosening of elementary particles we call atoms, resulting in fire from nuclear fission? The core of atomic bombs are actually hotter than the sun. Will Christ, who holds all things together (Col. 1:17), let atoms loose of grand proportions?

Can heaven change?

Because of long-held assumptions people have about heaven being a mere spiritual place where they will spend eternity with God, this idea of heaven **changing** can be difficult to accept. This also may be due to the many books failing to make distinctions between the intermediate state (now) and eternal states (future), using "heaven" as a basic, all-inclusive term.

In response, Randy Alcorn writes,

"Only God is eternal and self-existent. All else is created. Heaven is not synonymous with God, nor is it part of his essential being. Therefore, God must have created Heaven. It is not a place where he *must* dwell, but it is where he *chooses* to dwell. Because Heaven is a place where angels live, where finite beings come and go, it appears to be a finite environment, a specific location. Because God created Heaven, it had a beginning and is therefore neither timeless nor changeless. It had a past (the time prior to Christ's incarnation), it has a present (the Heaven where believers go when they die), and it will have a future (the eternal Heaven, or New Earth). The past Heaven, the present Heaven, and the future or eternal Heaven can all be called Heaven, yet *they are not synonymous*, even though they are all God's dwelling places." (Heaven, 44)

Revelation 21:1-3 describes the New Jerusalem *coming down from out of heaven* and resting on a New Earth. From there, the dwelling place of God has certainly changed, for a voice come from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among

them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...” Besides that, the future term for heaven is New Heaven. Gods dwelling place changes and is called *New*.

- **The New Jerusalem**

The New Heaven and New Earth will be the final resting place of the eternal city known as the New Jerusalem. The Bible describes a brilliant eternal city that will be filled with the God, His glory and His people. This is where our ultimate citizenship is and what Abraham had his heart set on (Heb. 11:10).

- Rev. 21:1-22:5
- Rev. 22:14-21

Alcorn writes, “Fifteen times in Revelation 21 and 22 the place God and his people will live together is called a city. The repetition of the word and the detailed description of the architecture, walls, streets, and other features of the city suggest that the term *city* isn’t merely a figure of speech but a literal geographical location. After all, where do we expect physically resurrected people to live if not in a physical environment? Everyone knows what a city is – a place with buildings, streets, and residences occupied by people and subject to a common government. Cities have inhabitants, visitors, bustling activity, cultural events, and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, entertainment, and athletics. If the capital city of the New Earth doesn’t have these defining characteristics of a city, it would be misleading for Scripture to repeatedly call it a city (Heaven, 249).” This city will change your mind about cities if you don’t like them.

- **Dimensions of the city:**

- Shaped like a cube (or possibly pyramid). It is interesting that the holy of holies in Solomon’s temple was a perfect cube. The New Jerusalem will not have a temple in it because the Lord is the temple (21:22) and the people are the pillars (Rev. 3:12). Because of this, the New Jerusalem has been considered the new holy of holies, in which God and His people dwell.
- 1,400 miles or 2,220 km length, height and width. 2 million square miles. It is extremely large and spacious for billions.
- Walls 72 feet thick
- It is approximately 1400 miles from Ainsworth, NE to Manhattan Bridge in NYC. That’s half the United States east to west. Also, north to south, go from the border of Minnesota/Canada to the Louisiana ocean. This is one 1400 mile square. Now we have to take that and make it 1,400 miles high or 600,000 stories – that’s way into outer space! Flying at 36,000 feet is only 6.8 miles above the surface of the earth.

- Ryrie commented, “It has been calculated that even if only 25 percent of this space were used for dwellings, 20 billion people could be accommodated spaciously.” This is for only 25 percent, which means up to 80 billion could spaciously be accommodated. Some say 100 billion. As of 2017, there are only 7.53 billion on the entire earth.

➤ **Descriptions of the city:**

- It is built by **God**.
- There is no temple in it for God and the Lamb are its temple. The Triune God literally dwells among us.
- No tears
- No death
- No crying
- No pain
- No treacherous **sea** (but possibly lakes or large bodies of water from the flowing river coming down from the throne)
- No curse
- No **need** of the sun or moon (because of God’s illumining glory)
- No night-time
- The 12 foundation stones have the apostles’ names on them, representing the Church.
- The 12 gates are single pearls, with an angel at each one, and have the names of the 12 tribes or Israel on them, representing Israel. The gates **never** close.
- Walls made of jasper
- In general, the city is made of pure and perfect glass-like gold (no infirmities)
- Only those in the Lamb’s book of life will enter it.
- The crystal-clear river of the water of life will flow from the Throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of the street.
- The Tree(s) of Life will be planted on both sides of the river, bearing 12 different kinds of fruit every **month**.
- We will see His face and serve Him and His name will be on our foreheads

THE CURRENT HEAVEN, OR INTERMEDIATE STATE

Heaven is a real place where God dwells right now. It is God's abode. All who die, go before Him to face a judgment of **faith** (Heb. 9:27). If they are believers, they stay. If they are non-believers, they are sent away to Hades (hell). This judgment is based on faith in Christ and not on works. From the time we die, until the next big eschatological event (the rapture), we are in what is commonly referred to as the intermediate state. The intermediate state is a theological term describing the time that we are in now between the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrections. The intermediate state or present "Heaven" is different now than it will be during the Millennium and during the New Heaven and New Earth. Though it is a wonderful place of comfort, it is also temporary. To understand this time period known as the intermediate state, we need to understand several **key terms and ideas** that are used in connection with the afterlife.

- **Death**

Death is an enemy of ours and is the last enemy to be destroyed after the Great White Throne Judgment, prior to the New Heaven and New Earth (I Cor. 15:26; Rev.20:14). Though death is our enemy, it has also lost its sting in the sense that the believer can look to it with a sense of expectation and hope, knowing we will see our Savior when pass through it. Even though it can be a scary thought to die, we also find comfort in knowing that God is sovereign over death and it is a divine appointment made by Him for us to meet Him (Ps. 139:16; Job 14:5; Rom. 14:7-9; Heb. 9:27). It is a blessed moment, blessed by God, with His permission.

The best way to think of death is not a "ceasing to exist" but as a "**separation**". When we die physically, the soul and spirit is separated from the body and we remain in a conscious state. The immaterial part of man **leaves** the material part of man. We become absent from the body but at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8) and Paul considered this '**much better**' (Phil. 1:24). Everyone, except those who are raptured when Christ comes for His Church, will die this death. Believers only die once and it is physical.

However, everyone who does not believe and is not saved, will also undergo a second death after their resurrection. This is a holistic death where the person is separated from God forever in the lake of fire, otherwise known as the eternal hell (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:6; 14-15).

The Bible describes death as:

- Much Better** (Phil. 1:24)
- Absent from the Body** (2 Cor. 5:8)
- Going Home** (2 Cor. 5:8)
- A Departure** (2 Tim. 4:6)
- A Safe Journey** (2 Tim. 4:18)
- The End of a Fight** (2 Tim. 4:7)
- Crossing a Finish Line or Finishing a Race** (Heb. 12:1; 2 Tim. 4:7)
- Being Gathered to Family** (Gen. 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 49:33)

Sometimes the Bible refers to death as ‘sleep’ (1 Cor. 15:51). Some have also erroneously concluded from the use of this word that when someone dies, they consciously enter into a sleep-like state called “soul sleep” until their resurrection. However, Jesus taught the Sadducees that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:31-33). In other words, there is life after death. Like Paul said, we go to be with the Lord and we are well aware of what is going on still in Heaven and on Earth (Lk. 9:31; 15:7; 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 18:20; Rev. 19:1-5 Heb. 12:1; 1 Peter 1:12). It is not the soul that sleeps, but the body. The body lays down to rest and the eyes shut just like it does when it is sleeping. The whole point is that just like sleeping, physical death is temporary, and it will raise again.

What about those whose bodies have been **cremated**? Well God made us from the dust and to dust we shall return, so He can sure gather our dust up again and fashion a resurrection body (Gen. 2:7; 3:19). One interesting verse on the power of God to raise the dead is found in Revelation 20:13, where it says, “the sea gave up the dead which were in it,” (Sheol?). Those who have been lost at sea or buried in the deepest parts of the ocean are not even out of reach for God.

• Rapture

The New Testament describes a mysterious event for the Church where Jesus Christ will return from heaven to appear in the earth’s atmosphere and take His Church from the earth to heaven to be with Him just before the Great Tribulation Judgment (Jacob’s Trouble). It will be a very sudden event where believers are transformed in a moment, the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51-52) and is our blessed hope (Titus 2:13; Rev.3:10).

(John 14:3-4; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 16:22; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:9-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-8; 1 Peter 1:7; 5:4; I John 2:28; 3:2; Rev. 4:1; 22:7, 12, 20)

The only people to not die physically are those who have the privilege of being raptured. The word “rapture” comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and is translated into English as “**caught up**”. The Greek word is “harpazo” and means to seize, to catch up, to carry off by force, to snatch up, to plunder, to gain control over (Matt. 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; Jude 23; Rev. 12:5). We get the word rapture from the Latin translation of the Greek word, “rapturo”. Christ will transform us and draw us to Him by the exertion of His power.

- Two or maybe three occurrences of rapture may have occurred in the Old Testament as types: Enoch, Elijah and possibly Melchizedek (Gen. 5:21-24; 2 Kings 2:11; Heb. 7:3). Noah may serve as a type who was lifted up above the judgment on earth.
- If we die before the rapture, Luke 16:22 suggests that holy angels may be involved in the transmission of people to heaven like a heavenly taxi service. Angels seem to connect well with people, showing them heaven and answering their questions, as happened with the apostle John (Rev. 21:9; 22:16).

By death or by rapture, we will be in a **conscious** state of existence with the Lord.

- **Sheol**

Sheol is frequently referred to as the place where people go when they die and means “a hollow or subterranean place.” It is “the place of the dead” and has two chambers – one for the believer and one for the unbeliever – with a chasm fixed between them (Luke 16:19-31). Even though the KJV translates this word as hell 31 times, it is not the equivalent of hell because it is *not only* a place of punishment and torment for the unbeliever, *but also* a place of comfort for the OT saint.

The compartment of sheol that holds believers is commonly believed to have been emptied between Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ descended and set them free to be in heaven with Him (Eph. 4:7-12; John 14:3; 1 Peter 3:18-19).

SHEOL VERSES

(compiled by David Thompson)

Genesis 37:35- Sheol was the place where Jacob anticipated he would go when he died. This is the first reference to Sheol in the Bible (42:38).

Numbers 16:30 - Sheol is a place to which one descends, not ascends when one dies (v. 29).

Numbers 16:33 - Sheol is a place in which people may be sent while alive—it is a living place.

I Samuel 2:6 - God is the one who determines when a person dies and goes down into Sheol.

II Samuel 21:6 - David viewed Sheol as the place he would go when he died (Ps. 18:5; 116:3).

I Kings 2:6, 9 - Sheol is a place located down where the gray-haired go when they die.

Job 10:21-22 - the place is referred to by Job as being a “land” that is deep and dark.

Job 17:16 - Sheol is a place where one goes when one dies.

Job 24:19 - Sheol is a place where sinners go (not those who are righteous).

Job 26:6 - Sheol is the place of departed spirits who tremble and who are seen by God (v. 5).

Psalms 6:5 - Sheol is a place where doing a work for God has ceased—no more opportunity to offer public witness or public thanksgiving and praise (Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17).

Psalms 9:17 - Sheol is a place where the wicked go.

Psalms 31:17 - Sheol is a place where enemies of God are silenced

Proverbs 9:18 - Sheol houses those who are dead, and there apparently are different depth levels.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 - Sheol is a place where work has ceased—the eternal retirement village or, as Strong said, a subterranean retreat.

Isaiah 5:14 - the space of Sheol is unlimited and can house immeasurable numbers.

Isaiah 14:9 - the location of Sheol is below and the inhabitants of Sheol are spirits.

Isaiah 38:10 - Sheol is said to have entrance gates and is a place that houses those who have left the land of the living and the inhabitants of the world (Is. 38:11).

Isaiah 38:18 - Sheol is a place one goes at death and a place where one cannot see any more demonstrations of God’s faithfulness.

Ezekiel 31:15-17 - Sheol is a real place that houses the dead and is located beneath the earth. It apparently has a part to it that offers comfort in a Garden of Eden-type of existence.

Ezekiel 32:21 - Sheol is a place where there is communication between those there.

- **Hades**

Hades is used to describe a place of afterlife punishment. It is used 10 times in the New Testament and **may be viewed in the same manner as the word ‘sheol’** (Acts 2:27) but is normally looked at as the compartment of sheol that holds unbelievers in torment until their resurrection unto judgment and then the lake of fire (Luke 16:23-25, 28). Hades itself will be thrown into the lake of fire with unbelievers (Rev. 20:14-15).

- **Paradise**

David Thompson writes, “The Greek word for paradise refers to a garden-type park that is very pleasurable.” It is used three times in the New Testament (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7) and Jewish teaching said that paradise was part of Sheol, a place of bliss and comfort. It has long carried with it the concept of the Garden of Eden that man lost and still longs for, and that the righteous will experience again after death. Paul described the third heaven as a paradise (2 Cor. 12:4).

- **Abraham’s Bosom**

This is understood as the compartment or place of rest for Old Testament saints in sheol (Luke 16:22, 23). To be on Abraham’s bosom is to imply you are sitting right next to him. You have a seat next to Abraham who is the father of the faith and are in paradise with him. Jew longed to be gathered to where Abraham was.

- **Abyss**

This is a reference to the place of demons where they fear to go (Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; 20:1-3) and is a separate location from Hades. It is likened to a bottomless pit (unfathomable) in the underworld and is where the demonic locusts come up out of. The beast (Anti-Christ) is said to come from here as well. They have as king over them an angel known as the Destroyer; Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek (Rev. 9:11; 20:1-3). This is not a reference to Satan but likely a destroying angel from God who holds the key to this abyss. He is the one who actually throw Satan in the abyss at the beginning of the Millennium.

- **Abaddon**

This word refers to an underworld place of ‘destruction’ or ‘ruin’ for the ruined dead in the Old Testament (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Pr. 15:11).

- **Gehenna**

Used 12 times and translated ‘hell’ in English, as in Matthew 5:22 and 23:33. Gehenna is actually referring to the valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem where they would burn trash constantly, including criminals’ bodies. It was known for always being on fire and smoking, so Christ used it as a metaphor for hell (Mt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15; 23:33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6).

- **Hell**

The word “hell” is said to have surfaced around 725 A.D. and is used to describe the place of eternal punishment by burning **fire**. Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus are all sometimes translated to the word Hell as well.

- **Tartarus**

In Greek mythology, this word was the name of a dark pit of torment where the worst criminals would go in the afterlife. It is only used once in the New Testament, by Peter in 2 Peter 2:4, and he used it to refer to a place of incarcerated **fallen angels**. Peter describes it as a pit of darkness they have been committed to for destruction and reserved for judgment. It is possible that Peter is using this name as a distinguished place from the abyss for certain angels from Genesis 6:1-4 who abandoned their proper abode, but he could have just been using this mythological word in a way the people could relate to as far as how to think of the abyss.

- **Purgatory**

This Roman Catholic doctrine asserts that when a believer dies without having confessed or made absolution for their sins, they go to a temporal place of punishment called purgatory to be ‘purged’ or ‘cleansed’ of their sins since “nothing unclean will enter”. It is not a word found in the Bible. It is an unbiblical teaching that denies imputed righteousness (CCC 1030) and is designed to keep people enslaved to the religious system of works. We believe that absolute perfection is required to enter heaven and that perfection is only granted to us through faith in Christ, who took our sins upon Himself on the cross and in exchange, places His perfection righteousness on us (2 Cor. 5:21). The doctrine of purgatory implies Christ’s sacrifice is insufficient and that one can be forgiven for his sin after death by paying for their own sin by time in punishment or by masses performed in their name on earth by those still living. The apocrypha was added to the RCC Bible to support their claims, citing 2 Macc. 12:43-46. However, Scripture NEVER supports any necromantical practice (exact opposite – Lev. 19:26; Dt. 18:9-13) and Scripture states Christ bore the full punishment of man’s sin – **fully satisfying God’s wrath** (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24) – and that should someone fail to trust Him before they die, it is too late, for there are **no second chances** (Heb. 9:27; Luke 16:19-31).

- **Lake of Fire**

This word is used six times in Revelation (19:20; 20:10, 14a, 14b, 15, 18) and refers to the final hellish state of punishment for unbelievers, fallen angels, Hades and death. It was originally prepared for Satan and fallen angels (Mt. 25:41) but men who do not believe will end up there with them for eternity. Christ may have been referring to this specifically when He used the term “furnace of fire” where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 13:42, 50; 18:8) and is an “eternal fire” to be **avoided at all costs** (Mt. 18:8; 25:41).

- **Judgment Seat of Christ**

Believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be examined and **rewarded** for their service to Christ. II Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the *judgment seat* of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” The word *judgment seat* in this verse is the Greek word *bematos*. Which is where we get the name Bema Seat for the judgment seat of Christ. “We must all appear before the *bematos* of Christ.” The term ‘bema’ is simply referring to an elevated platform from which to judge, a term the Corinthians could relate too in Greece with the Olympic and Isthmian games. A modern bema is somewhat like a score booth where judges sit and examine events from above and when the events are over the contestants go up to the score booth to receive their reward.

God has uniquely orchestrated and given to each one of children different **spiritual gifts**, talents, and materials to be used for the building up and edification of the church. We are responsible for exercising them and using them in service. I Corinthians 3:10-15 says our works will be tested with fire and if they are wood, hay, and straw to Him, they will be burned up. If they are gold, silver and precious stones to Him, they will remain, and he will be rewarded. The difference between the works remaining and the works burned up seems to be as to whether or not they were done according to God’s Word. A man whose works are completely burned up but has trusted Christ, will be saved, yet so as through fire. We all have an eternal *inheritance* but not all eternal *rewards* will be the same.

- **Great White Throne Judgment**

After the Millennium but before the New Heaven and New Earth, God will resurrect unbelievers for a judgment of **works** – including every *thought, word and deed* that was evil (Rev. 20:5; 11-15). It is the final judgment to take place. Ryrie says, “It is based on works in order to show that the punishment is deserved... though of course these unsaved people are first of all in this judgment because they rejected Christ as Savior during their lifetimes... and it results in everyone in this judgment being cast into the lake of fire. This is the resurrection of judgment.”

How should we think about heaven now?

We have talked a lot about heaven and the afterlife so far and for some, going beyond the idea of just a normal view of heaven and hell, this may be a new way of thinking. The idea that where we go when we die is not necessarily permanent, can be hard to accept. Even though the heaven will change somewhat, it is still a significant place. It’s a place where we meet the Lord and His place! It is an extremely important place and we can look forward to going there. John 14:1-3 is a great reminder of how to think in regards to the current heavenly realm:

- Don’t let your heart be troubled. Have peace.
- In the Father’s House there are many dwelling places.
- Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us.
- He will return again to receive us, that we may be with Him also.

Where is the present Heaven?

Is Heaven in the clouds or above them? Is Heaven part of our universe or another? Where is it? How can it seem like it's right there, and yet not be? While the answers will ultimately have to wait until we get there, there are two key observations that I think God wants us understand concerning heaven.

1. Heaven is up.

Every type of heaven is an upward heaven. The atmospherical heaven is *up*. The celestial heaven with the sun, moon, and stars is *up*. The third heaven is also *up*. Jesus *ascended* into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:11). The angels who appeared immediately following this asked the disciples, "Why do you stand looking *into the sky*? This Jesus who has been *taken up* from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Stephen gazed *up* into heaven, and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God from earth. The apostle John looked and saw a door standing open in heaven and heard a voice say to him, "*come up here*" (Rev. 4:1). Paul said he was caught *up* in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:4). Eventually Christ will *descend* from heaven and we be caught up to Him *in the clouds, in the air* (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Heaven is most certainly up. By it being up, God is saying symbolically that He is sovereign over the earth and man must humble himself before God (Isaiah 57:15). This is a dominant theme in the Bible. In the book of Daniel in particular, the term for God, *El Elyon*, "God Most High", is used more frequently than any other. Daniel is a book where pagan nations and demonic influences are dominating the earth (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome), and yet it is this book that emphasizes God is sovereign over the affairs of the earth (Daniel 4:25, 32, 34, 37; 5:23). It is Heaven that rules (Dan. 4:26) and He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?' (Dan. 4:35).

How far up is heaven physically? We don't know. Is it a portal to another place in the universe or in another universe? I would never argue about it but I personally I tend to think of it as being somewhere high with the atmosphere because that's as far as the language of the Bible takes it. It never takes us into other galaxies or universes. The wheels of God's throne are even said to touch the earth (Ezek. 1:15), implying He is very connected with it, though we can't see it. That's how God wants us to think of it. He is constantly involved here and now, from above. One Russian astronaut made it to space and said, "I still don't see God." To which Billy Graham replied along the lines of, "Tell him step out of the spacecraft and he'll see Him."

2. Heaven is invisible.

God is closely connected to the earth and very involved with it from above it, though we can't see it. It is an invisible reality that if made visible, would be. Christ has a literal, physical body, but in it's glorified state, could bend our reality by appearing and disappearing, despite locked doors. The Bible portrays Heaven as above the clouds, with Christ having to descend to the clouds to meet us there at the rapture. At times He can even make the Heavenly realm visible from earth, like He did with Stephen. Wayne Grudem says, "Stephen did not see mere symbols of a state of existence. It was rather that his eyes

were opened to see a spiritual dimension of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age, a dimension which none the less really does exist in our space/time universe, and within which Jesus now lives in his physical resurrected body, waiting even now for a time when he will return to earth.”

When Ezekiel saw the heavenly dimension opened up to him, he saw the living beings around the throne and the wheels of God’s throne actually touching the earth, lifting up from it at times (Ezekiel 1). God reached out with his hand and caught him by the lock of the head and the lifted him up between earth and Heaven (Ezek. 8:3). There is clearly an invisible war taking place all around us at all times. 2 Kings 6:17 is a remarkable passage when it comes to this subject. The king of Aram is warring against Israel and having a very difficult go at it because wherever the Arameans decide to go, Elisha the prophet knows about it and tells the king of Israel. The king of Aram is frustrated and asks, “Who’s the traitor? Who’s telling the king of Israel what we’re doing?” And his servants said “It’s Elisha. *He tells the king of Israel the words you speak in your bedroom.*” So they go after Elisha instead and sends a great army there with horses and chariots and they surround the city of Dothan at night, where Elisha is. When Elisha and his attendant Gehazi see this, Gehazi gets worked up about it and says, “What are we going to do?!” Elisha tells him not to fear though because, ““Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” Elisha prayed that the Arameans would be struck by blindness and they were.

Someday the Heaven that is up and invisible will come down and be visible. There will no longer be a separation there. We look forward to Christ returning and reigning during the Millennial Kingdom on His throne and then we look forward to the throne of God and of the Lamb, being right there on the New Heaven and New Earth. It is not ultimately the story of man working his way to God but God coming down to men. Revelation 21:3 says, “Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.” The two very real dimensions will become one.

How can we receive an abundant entrance?

According to 2 Peter 1:5-11, not every believer will have the same entrance into heaven (as they don't have the same rewards). Some, who have applied certain qualities to their faith, will have a more abundant entrance than others than those who didn't. The qualities that Peter gives to be applied *with diligence* are:

- **Moral excellence:** pursuing that which is **morally** right and abstaining from evil.
- **Knowledge:** understanding books and doctrines of the **Bible**; spiritual insight gained.
- **Self-control: consistently** putting to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit; taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ.
- **Perseverance:** staying focused on the development of Christlikeness and **servicing** Christ throughout their life.
- **Godliness:** maintain reverence and piety and **worship** for God.
- **Brotherly Kindness:** being friendly and doing good to others, especially other **believers**.
- **Love:** sacrificially loving people the way God loved **us**.

The more you study this list and meditate on it, the more you will cherish it. There is a sequential order to them and a climactic order. It has been called the "ladder of faith." According to the passage, supplying these qualities on top of your faith will not only give you an abundant entrance, but will also make you **useful for the Lord, fruitful, will keep you from stumbling and losing the assurance of your salvation in your conscience**. Will Jesus stand for you like He did for Stephen? Will you hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Just those two aspects alone make for an abundant entrance!

What will our bodies be like between death and resurrection?

We have to keep in mind that we are destined to be resurrected **people** living on a resurrected **earth**. The present "Heaven" where some of our loved ones are now and where we may be for a time is just a stop along the way in our journey. It's like a connecting flight to our final destination: the New Earth (Alcorn, 43). Since we are in a conscious, living state in heaven when we die physically, but still haven't received our resurrected bodies, it raises an interesting question: What will our intermediate bodies be like?

Based on consistent Scriptural teaching about the present Heaven, I believe we can conclude that even though the people who have already died are not in their original bodies, they certainly have a new and recognizable state that is glorious and **imperishable**, albeit temporal until the resurrection.

- **2 Cor. 12:1-4** – Paul couldn't tell whether he was in the body or out of it. If he clearly didn't have some form of body, he might've said, "in spirit".
- **2 Cor. 5:1-5** – Paul says our bodies are like a *tent* that can be taken down. It is temporal. But God has a *house* or *dwelling* for us fit for heaven.
- **Acts 1:11** – a literal, physical, resurrected Christ is in heaven now. There is at least one physical body in heaven.
- **Heb. 13:2; Mt. 28:2-4** – Angels have the ability to appear as normal men.

- **Gen. 18:1-3** – A theophany of Christ and two angels appeared to Abraham and Sarah in the appearance of men and even ate a meal together before investigating Sodom and Gomorrah firsthand.
- **Heb. 11:5** – God took up Enoch without him seeing death.
- **2 Kings 2:11-12** – Elisha was bodily taken up into heaven.
- **Luke 9:28-36** – Moses and Elijah appeared physically recognizable on the Mount of Transfiguration, while Christ took on heavenly glory at the same time in his physical body.
- **Rev. 6:9-11** – Martyrs in heaven have bodies that can wear white robes.

With all of instances of heavenly beings being able to take on a physical form or go in physical form, it seems plausible that we may have something similar. We don't know exactly what our bodies will be like, but they will certainly be able to function in heaven.

What will life be like in the intermediate heaven?

There is a lot we don't know about the intermediate state of Heaven regarding what it will be like. However, all that we can know is all God thought we needed to know, and we can make several observations.

1. We are in a conscious state of existence.

It is called eternal life for a reason. We will be awake and living, contrary to the idea of "soul sleep". (Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11)

2. We are limited to only being in heaven.

We will not travel back and forth from heaven to earth. Only in special instances did a prophet or major biblical character come back, such as Samuel to King Saul (1 Sam. 28) or Moses and Elijah to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-9).

3. We remember life on earth.

(Lk. 16:19-31; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 6:10; 18:20; 20:12)

Like the martyrs in heaven desiring justice, part of our personality in Heaven comes from remembering what our life on earth was like. We are rewarded based upon our life on earth and will all be able to tell stories of God's grace at work in our earthly lives.

4. We are still aware of God's program and what is happening on earth.

(Lk. 9:31; 15:7; 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 18:20; Rev. 19:1-5 Heb. 12:1; 1 Peter 1:12)

We are not ignorant of everything happening on earth but made more aware! Our thoughts about God's program will be clearer.

5. We rest from our labors and works.

(Dan. 12:13; Rev. 6:11; 14:13)

Right now we are working hard to serve the Lord with our lives with the limited time we have. We are in a race until the finish line. When we get to heaven, much of this mindset will shift to enjoying our reward (which includes service for Him – Mt. 25:14-30).

6. We are comforted.

(Lk. 16:25; Rev. 6:11)

Heaven is a place of comfort. God comforts his people there.

7. We are in paradise.

(Lk. 23:43; 1 Cor. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 2 Cor. 12:4)

If the righteous chamber of Sheol is considered a place like paradise, then surely Heaven will be as well. Paul was caught up there, describing it as paradise and full of inexpressible things.

8. We are no longer capable of sinning.

(Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:21)

There is nothing to tempt us in Heaven and we are no longer subject to the curse on the fleshly body but are in perfect righteousness.

9. We desire God's victory and justice against evil.

(Rev. 6:9-11; 18:20; 19:1-5)

With a heavenly perspective we have a better understanding of God's holiness and we can cry out for justice, whereas right now there is a deep complexity in the Christian's heart between his desire for forgiveness and justice.

10. We worship God.

(Rev. 5:13; 7:9-12)

We will love to worship and sing praises to God for all of eternity.

11. We will serve God.

(Rev. 7:15)

12. We will continue to learn.

(Rev. 5:4-5; 6:10-11)

As soon as we die, we are going to learn at an alarming rate what Heaven is like. There is no doubt we will have many questions and those who have gone before us and the angels who accompany us may show us around. Whenever Daniel or John had questions in their

heavenly visions, there was an angelic being right there to show them around and answer their questions.

- There is rejoicing over the learning of sinners repenting. (Lk. 15:7)
- There are certain things that haven't even entered into our hearts or minds yet concerning what God has prepared for us. (1 Cor. 2:9)
- The ability to visibly see the form of God is new. (2 Cor. 5:8)
- God will continually be showing us His graces in Christ in the ages to come (Eph. 2:6-7)
- We will learn more about God's sovereignty over the nations. (Rev. 4:1)
- We will learn the new name God has for us. (Rev. 2:17)

13. We have fellowship with other saints.

(Gen. 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 49:33; 2 Cor. 4:14; Thess. 2:19-20; Rev. 19:9)

In heaven, we will be far more relational than we are now (no smartphones to stare at! We will actually have to talk to each other). Relationships here tend to get broken and fall apart but relationships in heaven will be always healthy and growing. We will be reunited with loved ones who have passed on before us and all other saints. There will be many testimonies shared in heaven.

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN THE PRESENT HEAVEN?
by Randy Alcorn in his book HEAVEN, pgs. 65-67

Based only on Revelation 6:9-11, Randy Alcorn makes *21 observations* about the present state of those who go to the present Heaven.

“We can learn a great deal about the present Heaven from three key verses in Revelation: “When [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed” (6:9-11). I offer here twenty-one brief observations concerning this passage:

1. When these people died on Earth, they relocated to Heaven (v. 9).
2. These people in Heaven were the same ones killed for Christ while on Earth (v. 9). This demonstrates direct continuity between our identity on Earth and our identity in Heaven. The martyr’s personal history extends directly back to their lives on Earth. Those in the present Heaven are not different people; they are the same people relocated – “righteous men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23).
3. People in Heaven will be remembered for their lives on Earth. These were known and identified as ones slain “because of...the testimony they had maintained” (v. 9).
4. “They called out” (v. 10) means they are able to express themselves audibly. This could suggest they exist in physical form, with vocal cords or other tangible means to express themselves.
5. People in the present Heaven can raise their voices (v. 10). This indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional – even passionate – beings, like people on Earth.
6. They called out in “a loud voice,” not “loud voices.” Individuals speaking with one voice indicate that Heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.
7. The martyrs are fully conscious, rational, and aware of each other, God, and the situation on Earth.
8. They ask God to intervene on Earth and to act on their behalf: “How long...until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (v. 10).
9. Those in Heaven are free to ask God questions, which means they have an audience with God. It also means they need to learn. In Heaven, people desire understanding and pursue it.
10. People in the present Heaven know what’s happening on Earth (v. 10). The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged.
11. Heaven dwellers have a deep concern for justice and retribution (v. 10). When we go to Heaven, we won’t adopt a passive disinterest in what happens on earth. On the contrary, our concerns will be more passionate and our thirst for justice greater. Neither God nor we will be satisfied until his enemies are judged, our bodies raised, sin and Satan defeated, Earth restored, and Christ exalted over all.
12. The martyrs clearly remember their lives on Earth (v. 10). They even remember that they were murdered.
13. The martyrs in Heaven pray for judgment on their persecutors who are still at work hurting others. They are acting in solidarity with, and in effect interceding for, the suffering saints on Earth. This suggests that saints in Heaven are both seeing and praying for saints on Earth.
14. Those in Heaven see God’s attributes (“Sovereign... holy and true”) in a way that makes his judgment of sin more understandable.

15. Those in Heaven are distinct individuals: “Then each of them was given a white robe” (v. 11). There isn’t one merged identity that obliterates uniqueness, but a distinct “each of them.”
16. The martyr’s wearing white robes suggests the possibility of actual physical forms, because disembodied spirits presumably don’t wear robes. The robes may well have symbolic meaning, but it doesn’t mean they couldn’t also be physical. The martyrs appear to have physical forms that John could actually see.
17. God answers their question (v. 11), indicating communication and process in Heaven. It also demonstrates that we won’t know everything in Heaven – if we did, we would have no questions. The martyrs know more after God answered their question than before they asked it. There is learning in the present Heaven.
18. God promises to fulfill the martyrs’ request, but says they will have to “wait a little longer” (v. 11). Those in the present Heaven live in anticipation of the future fulfillment of God’s promises. Unlike the eternal Heaven – where there will be no more sin, Curse, or suffering on the New Earth (Revelation 21:4 – the present Heaven coexists with and watches over an Earth under sin, the Curse, and suffering.
19. There is a time in the present Heaven (vv. 10-11). The white robed martyrs ask God a time-dependent question: “How long, Sovereign Lord, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (v. 10). They are aware of time’s passing and are eager for the coming day of the Lord’s judgment. God answers that they must “wait a little longer” until certain events transpire on Earth. Waiting requires the passing of time.
20. The people of God in Heaven have a strong familial connection with those on Earth, who are called their “fellow servants and brothers: (v. 11). We share the same Father, “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3:15, ESV). There is not a wall of separation within the bride of Christ. We are one family with those who’ve gone to Heaven ahead of us. After we go to Heaven we’ll still be one family with those yet on Earth. These verses demonstrate a vital connection between in Heaven and the events and people on Earth.
21. Our sovereign God knows down to the last detail all is happening and will happen on Earth (v. 11), including every drop of blood shed and every bit of suffering undergone by his children. Voice of the Martyrs estimates that more than 150,000 people die for Christ each year, an average of more than four hundred people per day. God knows the name and story of each one. He knows exactly how many martyrs there will be, and he is prepared to return and set up his Kingdom when the final martyr dies.

“I’ve made these observations on the present Heaven based on only three verses. Unless there is some reason to believe that the realities of this passage *only* apply to one group of martyrs and to no one else in Heaven – and I see no such indication – then we should assume that what is true of them is also true of our loved ones already there, and will be true for us when we die.”

Do babies and young children go to heaven?

One of the more frequent questions about heaven is regarding whether or not babies and children too young to make a decision for Christ or the mentally handicapped who are not capable of doing so, will go to heaven? Scripture does not explicitly address this topic, but we can make some definite conclusions and observations.

Thought #1 – Only babies that are baptized go to heaven.

This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church. They believe that if the baby is not baptized, it goes to some place of Limbo on the outskirts of hell. Nowhere in the Bible can this teaching be affirmed of the baptized or unbaptized babies. Baptism alone has never saved anyone but is a symbolic expression of the gospel (being buried and raised to new life). Baptism is for those who believe and are identifying with Christ.

Thought #2 – All babies are born innocent in that they have not chosen to sin and are sinless, so they automatically go to heaven.

This is an erroneous opinion because being descendants of Adam, we're all born with a sin nature (Rom. 5:12; 18) and all can be considered "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." No man except Jesus Christ has ever been sinless.

Thought #3 – Only babies who are part of the elect go to heaven since it is God who does the saving where, when and how it pleases Him.

This implies that in the decree of God from eternity past, since everyone is predestined, babies will go wherever He pre-determined. This opinion certainly carries with it a foreknowledge on God's part (and God does know *possibilities* as well as *actualities*) in that He knows which baby would've trusted Him and which wouldn't have. God is sovereign and we can trust Him but the Bible has more to say on this subject.

Thought #4 – All babies born into a Christian home go to heaven.

This opinion is based on a couple of verses.

➤ **2 Samuel 12:22-23**

God took the life of David's child that he had with Bathsheba, committed in murder and adultery, and David said after he died, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." It seems here that even though David lost the child, he presumed he would see him again.

➤ **1 Corinthians 7:14**

This verse is often used but the emphasis seems to be on possibility of influencing the child or husband unto saving faith and not assuming they'll be saved because the parents' faith.

Thought (Doctrine) #5 – All babies, children and the incapable to make a decision for Christ go to heaven.

Some believe that all children are saved and in an ‘age of innocence’ until they reach a certain ‘age of accountability’ in their life where they have developed a moral capacity for knowing right and wrong and then willingly choose to do wrong. There is no age of accountability mentioned in the Bible, but many seem to think it’s around age 12 – after they know better, then they become accountable and must put their faith in Christ. However, the age debate can be done away with and the mentally handicapped can be included if we simply exchange the word “age” with “level” – “Level of accountability” – since some may never reach that level.

➤ **2 Samuel 12:22-23**

David assumed and had great comfort in the fact that he would see his child again.

➤ **Jonah 4:11**

God desired to show compassion to more than 120,000 persons who ‘do not know the difference between their right and left hand...’

➤ **Jeremiah 19:4**

The infants being sacrificed to Baal are considered ‘innocent’.

➤ **1 John 2:2; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:10**

We know that Christ’s sacrifice is for the whole world and that may mean it applies to those who cannot decide, such as children or mentally handicap.

➤ **Matthew 18:1-14**

Jesus used a kid as an object lesson and the analogy with disciples doesn’t work if their isn’t truth in the statement. Verse 10 suggest kids have guardian angels and verse 14 says it is not His will for them to perish.

➤ **Luke 18:16**

The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

➤ **Revelation 7:9**

Every tribe and tongue and nation from all time will be represented in Heaven. How is this possible? God has been gathering babies and little ones from all of human history. What comfort and joy to those who have miscarried or aborted or lost a little one!

THE FUTURE HEAVEN, OR ETERNAL STATE

Now that we have discussed what life is like in the current heavens with the intermediate state, we want to focus on discussing the eternal, fully glorified state of things.

What will our resurrected bodies be like?

When it comes to studying what our resurrected bodies will be like, the first place to study is in the gospels with Christ post-resurrection.

1. Our resurrected bodies will be like Christ's physically and spiritually.

(Philip. 3:21; 1 John 3:2-3; Rom. 8:29-30)

➤ **Physically**

In our fully glorified state, we will have a literal, physical body like Christ's. (Luke 24:36-43)

a. **He stood among them.** (v. 36)

We will be able to stand on solid ground.

b. **He urges them to examine Him with their eyes.** (v. 39)

We will be made of matter and not a transparent spirit.

c. **He urges them to examine Him by touch.** (v. 39)

We will be tangible and retain our senses.

d. **He shows them His hands and feet.** (v. 40)

We will have bodies like now with hands and feet. Christ still has his marks.

e. **He asks for something to eat and He eats it.** (v. 41-43)(Jn. 21:10-15)

We will be able to eat and drink as well, as from the river of life and from the tree of life (Lk. 14:15; Rev. 19:9; 21:6; 22:2, 14)

➤ **Spiritually**

We will also be spiritually pure like Him, **no longer having a sin nature or the desire for sin**. The war between the flesh and the Spirit has ended. We simply walk in the Spirit. The wages of sin, which is death, is no longer there – so neither is sin, which causes it. This corruptible will put on that which the incorruptible.

(Rom. 7:24-25; 8:29-30; Rev. 21:4, 27; 1 Cor. 15:52)

Sin will not exist in Heaven and there are specific sins that God has pointed out specifically that will not be in heaven: Fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminate men (who think they're women), homosexuals, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling (verbal abuse), swindling (cheating people out of money), immorality (sexual), impurity, sensuality unrestrained passion), sorcery (witchcraft/drug related), enmity (hostility), strife (contentions), jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, carousing, cowardice, unbelief, abominations, murder, lying.

2. Our resurrection bodies will be immortal.

(1 Cor. 15:42-54)

When we are resurrected, our earthly bodies go from being mortal to immortal, from perishable to imperishable. This does not mean they will simply be reconstituted the way they are now but are transformed into something fit for Heaven. They are our bodies, but they are also new spiritual bodies.

3. Our resurrection bodies will have new capabilities.

(Mt. 14:25-29; Jn. 20:19, 26; Lk. 24:31; Acts 1:9)

They will likely be able to do some or all of the things Christ did in defying the laws of nature like gravity and physics. We may be able to appear or disappear, walk on water, ascend and descend (like Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration or the two witness who ascend).

4. Our resurrected bodies will be healthy and powerful.

(Is. 35:5-6; 40:31; Rev. 7:16; 21:4)

Our resurrection bodies won't be overweight or underweight, but healthy in every proportion. There won't be any disabilities, mental or physical. There will be no more deaf or blind or lame. All will be healthy. They will be efficient and not hurt or ache or get sick like these ones do. They will not grow tired and weary or hungry or thirsty but at the same time will be able to enjoy food and drink and rest. Our bodies are sown in weakness but raised in power.

5. Our resurrected bodies will have emotional stability.

(Rev. 21:4)

God and angels and redeemed men have emotions in the present heaven and show their emotions. They are passionate about justice (Rev. 7:11-12; Rev. 18)! Our emotions are part of being made in God's image, who has emotions too. There will most certainly be emotions in the eternal Heaven but any tears of sadness or skewed feeling caused by living in the old sinful world like depression or despair will be wiped away. Personally, I like to think of Jesus smiling a lot and with a joyful countenance that upset the frowning Pharisees.

Alcorn writes, "There are no more tears of suffering over sin and death, the tears of oppressed people, the cries of the poor, the widow, the orphaned, the unborn, and the persecuted. God will wipe away the tears of racial injustice. Such crying shall be no more. The verse primarily addresses not tears per se but the tears coming from injustice and sorrow. Hence, we might shed tears of joy in Heaven.... We know that people in Heaven have lots of feelings – all good ones. We're told of banquets, feasts, and singing. People will laugh there (Luke 6:21)."

Note: It seems that most people think that once we get to the present Heaven there will be no more tears, but it is important to note that this verse about Christ wiping our tears away isn't **until** the future New Heaven. There may be sadness or shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers who didn't live for the Lord (Heb. 12:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:15). But at the same time, Christ will show generous loving grace for His people even in such a case and wipe away tears. Every cup will overflow in Heaven, but some will overflow more. (On a side note, there is no sin nature either so there is no jealousy.)

6. Our resurrected bodies will be able to shine.

(Ex. 34:29-30; Mt. 13:43; 17:2; Dan. 12:3; Luke 9:28-31)

This is a promise! The shining of the saints and angels that the Bible often speaks of may come from simply being in God's presence like Moses. The bright-shining effect is certainly real but also symbolic of being glorified with Him.

7. Our resurrected bodies will not be identical.

(Luke 9:30-31)

On the mount of transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were both there and clearly distinguishable and recognizable. We will look like ourselves perfectly as God wants us to look, likely even with differences in height and stature.

***Our resurrection personalities will not be identical either.**

While we will all be like Christ, it doesn't mean that we will lose our unique personalities. We don't become spitting images of one another. Alcorn writes, "Distinctiveness is God's creation, not Satan's. What makes us unique will survive. In fact, much of our uniqueness may be uncovered for the first time." What does he mean by that? He means we all have some sort of pressure to bend to the world's standards instead of being who God wants us to be. Those who really begin to understand their identity in Christ – knowing they're loved, accepted, secure and significant in Christ – are freed from the world's mold and world's image for them and can truly serve God and serve others. Isn't it interesting how grounded believers can walk against the grain of the world and not care? C. S. Lewis said in Mere Christianity, "Until you have given up yourself to Him you will not have a real self. Sameness is to be found most among the most 'natural' men, not among those who surrender to Christ. How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and conquerors have been: how gloriously different are the saints."

8. Our resurrected bodies will wear fine clothes.

This is reaffirmed more than once:

- a. We are promised robes. (Rev. 3:4-5)
- b. Heavenly people wear robes. (Rev. 7:9)
- c. The Marriage Supper attire is white fine linen. (Rev. 19:7-8)
These robes are very real and also symbolic of righteous deeds.
- d. The army clothes of Heaven are not camouflage, but fine, white and clean. (Rev. 19:14)
- e. Tribulation martyrs are given robes. (Rev. 6:11; 7:13)
- f. Jesus wears a bright white robe with a golden sash (Mk. 9:3; Lk. 9:29; Rev. 1:13; 19:13)
- g. Angels wear white robes and the seven angels who pour out the bowl judgment will have golden sashes. (Mt. 28:3; Mk. 16:5; Rev. 15:6)

9. Our resurrected bodies will retain their gender.

This is up for debate among some of the best scholars, but I firmly believe God created genders and they are part of our identity. He created us male and female and as such, we will also be judged according to our gender roles. Men are honored or shamed for how they lived as a man, and women are honored or shamed for how they lived as a woman. Just as all are equal in the Godhead but have different offices, so man and woman are equal as well, but have different offices and expectations (1 Cor. 11:3).

When Paul said that in Christ there is no male or female (3:28), he wasn't saying that those distinctions don't have a place or serve a purpose, but that they don't matter when it comes to salvation and identity in Christ. By God's grace, we are all saved the same way and are one in Christ and equal in Christ. What can be said for gender is also true of social status and race. Also, when Christ said that in the resurrection we do not marry and aren't given in marriage, but are like angels, He wasn't implying we would be genderless but that our relationships would be dramatically different from earth's (Mt. 22:23-33). Even angels when they appear in human form appear as gendered men (Gen. 18-19). The only married state in Heaven is our marriage with Christ and it is so satisfying we won't sense the need for an earthly marriage between man and woman. We won't have sexual relationships and bear children. There is no death and so there is no need to reproduce. It is irrelevant. We will know our earthly families and friends and deepen those relationships, but it's kind of like it is now when we meet another believer – we realize they are our brother and sister (Mt. 12:46-50) – and we have a whole new family to get to know. Since we will not be married forever to our loved one, it is another great reason to make the Lord your portion and your ultimate hope and desire to spend eternity with and not someone else.

10. Our resurrection bodies will likely have an age.

This point is obviously up for debate, but it doesn't make any logical sense that someone who dies as a baby would be in heaven as a baby forever or someone who dies old will have the same appearance as they did when they were old. It would make sense that the person is in some form or appearance of themselves at an age that would be considered perfect or optimal in their development through life. C.S. Lewis said we would look "ageless". It is enough to think we will look young but mature. We'll all have drunk from the fountain of youth at the optimal time.

David Thompson writes,

"Back in the A.D. 1200's, there was a lot of "theological ink" given to this very topic and the consensus was a person reaches his or her peak age of perfection around age 30, so that in heaven all would be around age 30. [Some] thought we would all appear at the age that Christ was crucified which is around age 33."

Whatever age we look like, we know it will be God's best and the way He wants us to look. No need to debate that.

11. Our resurrection bodies may retain some of their racial and ethnic identities.

(Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 21:24-26; 22:2)

It appears as though there will still be distinctions between ethnicities but these distinctions are beautiful pictures of God's grace and restorative work across all walks of life. Though there are clear differences between us, there is also a perfect unity. This is one of the neatest elements about the Church today – no matter who we are or where we come from or what they look like, we can set an example to the world with a deep spiritual connection as brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember, creative distinctions are of God and not Satan's. Satan uses those distinctions to divide, but in Heaven there is no sin to divide.

Quote from John MacArthur's book, "The Glory of Heaven" (pg. 71)

"A glorified body alone would be good reason to fix all our hopes and affections on heaven, wouldn't it? My dear friend Joni Eareckson Tada knows this as well as anyone. Her earthly body was paralyzed from the shoulders down when she dived into shallow water as a teenager. In recent years she has waged a battle against cancer. As long as I've known her, she has had her heart set on heaven. It shows in her conversation, her songs, her radio messages, and her artwork. Often it seems as if talking with her draws one to the very edge of heaven, where we can see in. Joni explains in her book on the subject: *'I can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness – powerful and dazzling....It's easy for me to "be joyful in hope," as it says in Romans 12:12, and that's exactly what I've been doing for the past twenty odd years. My assurance of heaven is so alive that I've been making dates with friends to do all sorts of fun things once we get our new bodies....I don't take these appointments lightly. I'm convinced these things will really happen.'*"

What will the New Heaven and New Earth BE LIKE?

Now we discuss some more specific questions regarding our final Heavenly destination of the New Heaven and New Earth with the New Jerusalem.

1. Can we even know for sure what it will be like?

Here are few quotes from Christian authors/pastors that Alcorn cites regarding this question:

- “Is this new earth like our present earth? Probably not.”
- “The eternal phase of Heaven will be so unlike what we are familiar with that our present language can’t even describe it.”
- “There’s nothing in our present experience that can suggest to us what Heaven is like.”
- “We can’t begin to imagine what Heaven will be like.”
- “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9)

Many Christians don’t think we can know a whole lot about Heaven but as we’ve studied so far, there is a lot we can know or at least know how to think of it – more than people generally give the Bible credit for. Even 1 Corinthians 2:9 is followed up in verse 10 by, “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” Since we know we will live on a New Earth that is free from sin and Satan’s corruption, why don’t we start by looking around us and seeing it from that perspective? Alcorn writes, “We shouldn’t close our eyes and try to imagine the unimaginable. We should open our eyes, because the present Earth is as much a valid reference point for envisioning the New Earth as our present bodies are a valid reference for envisioning our new bodies... We shouldn’t read into the New Earth anything that’s wrong with this one, but can we not imagine what it would be like to be unhindered by disease and death? Can we not envision natural beauty untainted by destruction?” No more walkers or canes. No more snarling dogs or growling bears. More smiles and no depression.

This Earth is full of indications of what the New Earth will be like. We will have bodies. There is at least one river (Rev. 22:1); great and high mountains to view the city from (21:10); fruit producing trees (22:3). The New Jerusalem is a city and constructed with similar construction ideas: foundation stones, gates, walls (21:12-14); described as a house with many rooms (Jn. 14:2). It is made up of fine, glass-like materials we are familiar with in this world: gold, jasper, sapphire, emerald, pearls, etc. It can be measured with human measurements (21:15-17).

2. Is there one language?

Genesis 11:1-9 says that at the beginning of the world everyone spoke the same language and same words. But in direct opposition to the Lord's command to spread out and fill the earth, they started to build a great city and tower going up to heaven. With one language they were able to defy God's desire for them very efficiently, so He put a stop to it by confusing their language. He created multiple languages and made it so those who had a new language couldn't even understand their old one. So naturally they started communicating only with those who spoke the same language and spread out instead of building the city. The reason for the language barriers was sin and since there is no sin on the restored New Earth, the one central universal language will likely be restored. Everyone will understand each other and there will be perfect fellowship. God original order was many nations but one language.

Revelation 7:9 indicates that people from every tongue cried out with one, singular loud voice, implying they all spoke the same language. If at Babel, God supernaturally removed some people's knowledge of a language and instantly gave them the ability to speak a new language, then like He did at Pentecost with the gift of tongues, He can certainly help us do the same as soon as we die. We can expect a reversing of Babel or the ability to speak other languages.

3. Is it a colorful place?

It's typical to think of heaven as this place where everything's either white or gold, and when we looked at the Heavenly attire mentioned in the Bible that's basically all we see. But I also can't imagine that for eternity, all we will wear is white (if we do, we'll be content with it anyway). I say this because God created this Earth full of color. This is a colorful world that we live in and it is spectacular. What mesmerizes us as we gaze upon the beautiful landscapes and pictures of this world is the colors in them (crystal clear blue waters; deep blue skies; lush green valleys; orange, red, and pink sunsets). Colors actually teach us a lot and have symbolic meanings behind them (white robes = righteousness). And since we're going to be living on a New Earth, why wouldn't it be colorful? We already know that God's throne has a surrounding radiance about it that resembles a rainbow (Ezek. 1:28). This rainbow may even turn an emerald-green color at certain times such as just before the tribulation (Rev. 4:3). We know there are colorful stones and streets of gold and walls of jasper. Certainly Heaven will be colorful.

The exact color of some of these stones is unknown. See Revelation 21:19-21.

- Jasper: Diamond/Red
- Sapphire: Dark Blue
- Chalcedony: Dark Green
- Emerald: Blue/Green
- Sardonyx: Red and White
- Sardius: Bright Reddish Orange
- Chrysolite: Golden Yellow
- Beryl: Light Blue
- Topaz: Light Greenish Yellow
- Chrysoprase: Apple Green

- Jacinth: Dark Violet
- Amethyst: Light Purple

4. Will there be animals?

The Bible has a lot to say about animals. They are important in God's creation.

- a. After God created the animal and insect world, He declared it good. He desires that animals exist. (Gen. 1:21, 25)
- b. God saved the animals out of the flooding judgment and the Noahic covenant included the animals in it. They are protected and cared for by God. (Gen. 6:19, 8:19)
- c. In the final verse of Jonah, God expresses His care for the many animals in Nineveh. (Jonah 4:11)
- d. Proverbs says a righteous man will care for his animals, flocks or herds, but the wicked do not. (Prov. 12:10; 27:23)
- e. The animal world brings praise and glory to God. (Ps. 148:7, 10; Rev. 5:13)
- f. God uses the animal world to teach us many lessons about life. (Job 12:7-10; Prov. 6:6-8; Matt. 6:26)
- g. God has used many animals in His program work.
 - Elijah and ravens (1 Kings 17:4)
 - Balaam and the talking donkey (Num. 22:20-35)
 - Jonah and the great fish (Jonah 1:17)
 - Christ's royal entry on a donkey (Matt. 21:1-10)
 - Christ's return with horses (Rev. 19:11-16)
 - An eagle flying midheaven pronounces woes upon earth dwellers (Rev. 8:13)
- h. God lifts the curse on creation during the Millennium. They cease to bite and fight and consume each other and us. They become vegetarians again. (Is. 11:6-9; 65:25)
- i. All of creation longs for the day when the curse is lifted.
- j. The animal last mentioned in the Bible are white horses in the Second Advent, and if these horses come from the present Heaven, then we have no reason to doubt horses would be on the New Heaven and New Earth.
- k. Animals were formed from the dust of the ground like man (Gen. 2:19) and God breathed life (*nephesh*) into them as well (Gen. 1:30; 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22).
- l. Solomon may suggest that animals have spirits (the LXX uses the word 'psyche' for soul) and as the wisest man in the world (besides Christ), leaves the idea of animals going to Heaven as somewhat open (Ecc. 3:18-21; Ps. 104:29). This does not imply that every insect or creature will be in eternity or that animals are equal with man. Man is made in God's and animals are not.

With all the positive information we have in the Bible regarding animals, I believe we can expect animals on the New Earth.

5. Will there be privacy?

Some people's view of Heaven is that of constant communal living on clouds talking and strumming harps or one giant church service that never ends in which there is no time to get away and rest privately. This might be fine thinking for some extroverts but not something any introvert would look forward to, at least right now. From the Scriptures I believe we can say with confidence that there will be privacy and private **ownership** in Heaven because we remain individuals with individual rewards.

- a. The doctrine of rewards tells us we will not all have the same reward. Some will have earned more right to certain things or greater things than someone else. (Lk. 16:10-12; Mt. 6:20; 1 Cor. 3:8-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- b. We will each have a certain position(s) in which to serve. (Rev.7:15; 22:3)
- c. There are eternal **dwelling places**. (Lk. 16:9)

In his book "Passion for Souls" Oswald J. Smith writes, John Chinaman was standing beside an Atheist. Said the Atheist to the Chinaman: "John Chinaman, what will be the first thing that you will do when you get to Heaven?" Said John Chinaman: "When I first get to Heaven I am going to walk the golden street of Heaven until I find the Saviour, and then I will fall down and worship Him for having saved my soul." "Fine!" sneered the Atheist. "And then, John Chinaman, what next will you do?" "Then," said John Chinaman, "I will walk the streets of Heaven again until I find the missionary who came to my country with the Gospel. I will grasp his hand and thank him for his part in my salvation." "What then will you do, John Chinaman?" enquired the Atheist. "Then," responded John Chinaman, "I will search the streets of Heaven again until I find the man who gave the money to make it possible for the missionary to come, and I will grasp his hand, and thank him for his part in my salvation." With that the Atheist turned on his heel and walked away. My friend, will there be any John Chinaman from any country in the world, who will come up to you and thank you when you get to Heaven? Or will you be lonely in Heaven? Will no one recognize you except a few of your own relatives and friends? I can think of no greater joy that could come to my heart in Heaven than to have multitudes of... people, stop me every now and again and say to me: "We are in Heaven because [of] you." (pg. 85)

- d. Jesus spoke of Heaven as a house with **rooms**. (Jn. 14:3)
- e. Daniel was told he would rise again to receive his "allotted portion". (Dan. 12:13)
- f. The idea that there will be kings and nations on the New Earth suggests boundaries and properties (Rev. 21:24). We have to remember that outside of the New Jerusalem's gates, there is an entire Heaven and Earth, and likely several times larger than this one based on the sheer size of the city.
- g. Christ has promised to give us "white stones" with new names on the stone that only we and the Lord, based on our relationship and personality and service, will fully comprehend (Isaiah 65:15; Rev. 2:17). He treats us all as unique and each of our relationships with Him is unique.

Throughout the centuries many have thought of the idea of ownership in Heaven as bad or sinful, even worthy of being kicked out of it. That idea is false. Even Ananias and Sapphira had the right to do with their property whatever they wished and with the money they sold it for (Acts 5). They weren't struck down for not giving the land or money to the church community, but for lying about it and trying to make themselves look good by their giving. God is giver and a rewarder of the faithful. If there's a Giver, there must be a receivers.

Alcorn writes, “Ownership is never wrong [or selfish] when God distributes to us possessions he wants us to have.... Heaven isn’t a socialist utopia in which private ownership is evil. Materialism, greed, envy, and selfishness are sins; ownership is not.” [emphasis mine]. The fact that what’s “ours” is ultimately God’s doesn’t change when we get to Heaven. For a proper perspective on ownership see 1 Chron. 29:10-19.

6. Will there be time?

Yes. When it comes to measuring distance in Heaven, Revelation 21:17 is a key text to know. The measurements being given to John by the angel are said to be called angelic measurements, which he says are also man’s measurements. When he says the wall of the New Jerusalem is 72 yards thick, it’s going to be 72 yards thick. It means what it says. They don’t have some unknowable spiritual meaning. We have no reason to believe that angelic measurements of time in Heaven should differ than man’s measurement of distance. When Revelation 22:2 when it says, “On either side of the river is the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit every month,” we can conclude it really means that. There will be time on the New Earth and possibly even seasons. Every season and climate on this earth is enjoyable and on the New Earth, it may be possible to enjoy a different season or climate depending upon which city gate you go out of – wouldn’t that be something! (I say that with a sanctified imagination)

God is never limited by time but I believe there is time in the present Heaven as well because there is continuity between what happens here and there. There is joy in Heaven when a sinner repents on earth (Rev. 15:7); there are “ages” to come (Eph. 2:7); the martyrs are told to “rest for a little longer” for their blood to be avenged (Rev. 6:11); when Christ broke the seventh seal there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour (Rev. 8:1); God’s martyrs serve Him day and night in His temple (Rev. 7:15); those in Heaven sing, and music requires time (meter, tempo); whatever sequence of judgments are opened in Heaven’s real time, immediately follows on Earth in real time, at the same time. God is a God of order and order requires sequence and steps and timing (1 Cor. 14:33, 40). We shouldn’t confuse eternity with infinity. Death, not time, is the real enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). “When we’ve been there ten thousand years bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we’d first begun” (John Newton)

7. Will we have memories of life on earth?

There will certainly be memory of life on earth in Heaven. We can say this for several reasons.

- a. Christ still has his marks and title ‘Lamb of God’, and we won’t ever be forgetting where those came from, on this earth where our redemption was accomplished. (Rev. 5:6; 22:1)
- b. With sharper minds and clearer thinking, our memory will likely be better. Our memories from earth may even become more elaborate if we’re able to see how God or His angels were actually intervening when we didn’t even know it. He might of saved us or protected us by direct intervention or through good or bad circumstances outside of our control. (2 Kings 6:17)

- c. In Sheol, Lazarus and the rich man clearly remembered their lives on earth and even their family members who were still alive.
- d. Martyrs in the present Heaven remember they were martyred. (Rev. 6:10)
- e. The entire doctrine of rewards in Heaven based upon what we did on earth, implying there will be thorough and accurate memory down to the very motives of men's hearts in doing it. (Rev. 14:13; Dan. 12:13; 1 Cor. 4:5)
- f. Luke 16:9 is an interesting text that seems to point out that who we give to or support financially (serving as senders), will remember us in Heaven and welcome us based on their recollection of it.

Alcorn writes, "Memory is a basic element of personality. If we are truly ourselves in Heaven, there must be continuity of memory from Earth to Heaven. We will not be different people, but the same people marvelously relocated and transformed... Undoubtedly we will remember God's works of grace in our lives that comforted, assured, sustained, and empowered us to live for him." (emphasis mine)

Having established there is indeed memory in Heaven, I believe it is important to also note what Isaiah 65:16-17 said in that former troubles are forgotten and "former things will not be remembered or come to mind." This indicates that we may forget several bad things, being so enthralled with the new. We have a whole new wonderful perspective and former things naturally begin to fade. Jesus expressed this similarly in John 16:21, saying, "A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world." Despite how painful it was, a woman can be so overjoyed by her new baby that she is willing to go through it again because it brought about something beautiful.

8. Will knowing we have *loved* ones in hell spoil it?

The answer to this may lie in that which was just discussed – some of the former troubles and things will not be remembered nor come to mind (Isaiah 65:17). But the answer to this question is also complicated in our hearts by the use of the word 'loved'. Will knowing there are people in hell spoil Heaven? No. We usually have no problem seeing justice carried out on someone now who deserves it, such as a serial killer or school shooter, criminal, etc. But what if that serial killer or shooter was family? It makes it a little harder. Will knowing there are people in hell *that we loved* spoil Heaven? The answer, though it gets a little hung up in our throats, is no. When we get to Heaven we will be fully glorified with a new and full perspective of God's ways, fully aware of God's holiness and righteousness and justice. We will have a greater comprehension of Him and ourselves. We will be amazed by God's patience and grace toward us, knowing we deserved hell and did not deserve Heaven. The mindset is not like this world, where we wonder how good people could be sent to hell, but how bad people could be sent to Heaven (Alcorn, 361). Just because they are family members we love, we will still understand them as someone who rebelliously rejected God.

In a glorified state with a heavenly perspective, we can declare with the martyrs of Rev. 19:3, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever." Babylon, an entire city with likely millions of people, has just been laid waste and yet here they (we) are praising God for it.

Revelation says despite all the judgments, they refused to repent (Rev. 9:20-21). He freely offered them eternal life, but they refused to accept it. Countless people will be slaughtered when we return with Christ in Revelation 19 and also at the end of the Millennium in Revelation 20 when Satan is released for a final rebellion, yet we understand, *soberly* and *humbly*, that this is right and in accordance with God's Word and character (acting on holiness). The answer to this question may be a lot like the little book John eats in Revelation 10:8-10 that is bittersweet – prophecy predicts there will be many bittersweet moments to come, as it was a bittersweet moment for Noah and his family when God flooded the world. It is critical to remember when considering this question that there will be no more sorrowful tears or mourning or pain in the New Heaven and New Earth. Contentment and peace will abound in the glorified heart and mind.

What will we DO in the New Heaven and New Earth?

1. Will we be bored?

The thought people tend have of Heaven being boring is certainly not a divine idea. Every now and then someone will brag about how they would rather go hang out in hell with their friends and have a good time than go to heaven to play harps or sit in a constant church service. One rock band in particular likes to sing about their free living and easy ride on the highway to hell where they're going to party with their friends and nothing's going to stop them. People who think like this don't have a proper understanding of Heaven or hell, and God will stop them from throwing a party in hell. It will be anything but a party. It will be painful and lonely. It will be "boring as hell".

Alcorn says those who believe this have "succumbed to Satan's strategies 'to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place' (Revelation 13:6)." People think sin is fun, but time eventually reveals to them how miserable and frustrating and boring and empty sin is (Rom. 6:21). Satan is not going to be on a throne in hell ruling over a bunch of sinful people who worship him. Rather, he will be the most severely punished being in hell. Hell is not a place of fellowship or fun, but of isolation and boredom and torment. There is nothing to enjoy about it.

Charles Spurgeon wrote,

"This much we know: that Hell is a place of absence from God [2 Thess. 1:9], a place where there is never sleep or rest or hope. It is a place where a drop of water is denied, though thirst shall burn the tongue; a place where pleasure never breathed, where light never dawned, where anything like consolation was never heard of; a place where the gospel is denied, where mercy droops her wings and dies; a place of fury and of burning; a place the likes of which imagination has not pictured. May God grant that it may be a place which you shall never see and whose dread you shall never feel. When you die, sinner, flight from Hell becomes impossible. You are lost then, eternally. Oh, while yet you are on praying ground, I pray you, think on your end. Think! Think! This warning may be the last you shall ever hear. Perhaps while you sit here, the last sands are dropping from the hourglass, and then no more warning can be given because redemption and escape shall be impossible to you. Sinner, I lift up before you now Christ the crucified one: 'Whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.'"

Heaven, however, is going to be filled with things do – including having fun and hanging out with your friends. There will be rejoicing and laughter. It is the presence of evil and fear of sinful men in this world that actually robs us of peace and security and keeps us from being able to enjoy life to the fullest. God is the antidote for boredom in this life and the next. Psalm 16:11 says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Isaiah 65:18-19 says, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of morning."

2. Will we explore and travel?

Of course, there is going to be travel and exploration! As soon as we die, we travel to heaven!

- The trip to heaven will be quite an experience.
- The trip back to earth on a white horse will be incredible.
- It's possible we will be able to transport (jump) ourselves like Christ or Philip (Acts 8:25-40) from one place to another by thinking or willing it. (May God grant everyone's dream of being able to fly like a superhero – We can't know for sure, but the overwhelming desire is there)
- We know there will be conventional modes of travel because of the streets and gates. Peter walked on water with Christ so even walking could be a surreal experience compared to what it is now.

We won't always be in the city.... we'll go out through one of the gates and explore the New Earth, which is probably much bigger than this planet in light of the city's dimensions. If there's a river, there certainly might be a lake at the end of it to explore or snorkel in. If there's a great and high mountain, there might be more of them to climb. If there are 12 trees, why not more? If places on this earth are breathtaking, how much more the New Earth! *One of mankind's favorite things to do from the time they're a kid to the time they retire is to travel and explore.* This is God-given **desire** and brings praise to Him when people enjoy His creative wonders. God gives us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). The created world now is a huge part of many people coming to know Christ. It's part of what told us deep down that there is an invisible God who is good to us (Rom. 1:18-23). If these heavens declare the glory of God, certainly the eternal heavens will.

3. Will we work?

Many people think that Heaven is just going to be one big retirement party where there is never any work. In fact, for many, the very thought that there would be work in Heaven is repulsive and if anyone gets there and finds there is work, they will want to leave! However, when it comes to work in the Bible, it is portrayed much differently. Work is a good thing! The first thing we notice God doing is working hard for six days to create the universe! God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are always working (John. 5:17). Work is something God created for us to enjoy and to find a sense of reward in.

We were created to be active beings. Adam was to cultivate the garden of Eden for work (Gen. 2:17). **Work came before the Fall** into sin and was a major element God had in mind for our lives. After the Fall, work got harder for Adam as the ground was cursed and it was harder to cultivate, and weeds sprang up (Gen. 3:17-19). Christ did carpentry before ministry. Hard work is rewarding and it makes our sleep pleasant (Ecc. 5:12). The wisest man to ever live (besides Christ) was Solomon and he knew the importance of work in man's life: It is good and fitting for a man to eat and drink and enjoy his labor under the sun in the few years God has given him, "for this is his reward" (Ecc. 5:18).

Not all work may be for us, based on our personalities, but there is work each of us can **enjoy**. Some enjoy cooking, some landscaping, some construction, some teaching, some farming, some ranching, some nursing, etc. Many people actually love to work and work to a fault (too much). As believers, our work is even more satisfying when you add in the element of doing it for the Lord. Work is worship and He even promises to reward us for working hard for the Lord and doing everything for the glory of God (Col. 3:23-24). On the New Earth, the curse will be totally lifted and work will be even more satisfying than it is now (Rev. 22:3). We won't get so exhausted and fatigued. It will be a farmer's fertile paradise, for even in the Millennium the sun will be more effective (Is. 30:26) and Amos 9:13 talks about the sower overtaking the reaper!

It is through work that we serve others and the Lord. Revelation 22:3 says His bond-servants will serve Him on the New Earth. Serve is a verb. It is active. People who serve have tasks and things they do to keep them occupied and find joy and reward in. Those who are faithful in this life with what the Lord gives them will actually be put in charge of **more** work to do! Christ considers this part of our joy in Heaven: "Enter into the **joy** of your Master!" (Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:11-27)

4. Will there be **entertainment**?

Entertainment in this world is often anything but pleasing to God but that doesn't mean there isn't entertainment that is. Music, media and other forms of entertainment all have the propensity to be used for evil or for glorifying God. In Heaven, they will only glorify God. We need to remember He created our smiles and laughter and fun and adventure.

- There will be singing, music, laughter, eating and drinking.
- Many people love reading and can expect at least one book (the Bible! – Mt. 23:35; Rev. 22:18). Surely there will be testimonies recorded and published, clean stories imagined, greater works penned in Heaven by men with sharper minds than those penned on earth.
- Joyful dancing is no stranger to the Bible (Ecc. 3:4; Jer. 31:12-14; Ex. 15:20-21; 2 Sam. 6:16; Ps. 30:11; 149:3; 150:4; Lk. 15:25).
- Imagine thrills or outdoor adventures like hiking and paragliding without the fear of death or serious injury.
- Sports, though they can be a very prideful and contentious form of activity and entertainment now, will be thoroughly enjoyable in Heaven. Imagine sports without sinful arguments and exhaustion and injury! That sounds fun!

Alcorn writes,

"Because sports aren't inherently sinful, we have every reason to believe that the same activities, games, skills, and interests we enjoy here and now will be available on the New Earth, with many new ones we haven't thought of.... Sports and our enjoyment of them aren't a result of the Fall. I have no doubt that sinless people would have invented athletics, with probably more variations than we have today. Sports suit our minds and bodies. They're an expression of our God-designed humanity.... People have told me, 'But there can't be athletics in Heaven because competition brings out the worst in people.' That's true that some people's sin spills over during athletic competition. But in Heaven, there will be no worst in us to bring out. People further object: 'But in sports, someone has to lose. And in Heaven no one could lose.' Who says so? I've thoroughly enjoyed many tennis matches and ten-kilometer races I've lost. Losing a game isn't evil. It's not

part of the Curse. To say that, ‘everyone would have to win in Heaven’ underestimates the nature of resurrected humanity.”

“Eric Liddell understood that glorifying God extends to every part of our lives. Explaining that God has called him not only to missions work in China but also to compete in the Olympics, Liddell said to his sister, “He made me fast, and when I run I feel God’s pleasure.... To give up running would be to hold him in contempt.” (Heaven, 426-427)

5. We will see His face!

Always remember that the greatest joy and reward in Heaven is being with our God face to face. He is the focal point of Heaven and everything exists by Him and for Him. We want Him more than we want the comforts of Heaven and should get to know Him now, before we meet face to face. Revelation 22:4 describes the highlight of Heaven:

“There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”