

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

### INTRODUCTION:

Our life on earth is book-ended by two very traumatic events

- The one we label “birth” ... the other “death”
- The question is this: IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

The Christian message is clear: THERE IS LIFE AFTER LIFE

- Jesus encounter with Lazarus’ sister Martha

#### **John 11:20–26**

<sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup>“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup>Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

<sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup>and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

- <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.
- I am the one who raises the dead ... and gives life to the dead
- **He who believes in me** – trusts me - **will live** ... eternally
- i.e will have this resurrection life
- **even though he dies** ... physically ... body ceases to have life
- **and whoever lives** – physically - **and believes in me**
- **will never die** ... will experience resurrection life

It’s through the apostle Paul that God gives us a slightly fuller picture

- IN HIS FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS (**1 Corinthians 15:35ff**) he speaks to them and us about the resurrection from the dead and what that resurrection body would look like

#### **1 Corinthians 15:35–58**

<sup>35</sup>Some of you have asked, “How will the dead be raised to life? What kind of bodies will they have?”

<sup>36</sup>Don’t be foolish. A seed must die before it can sprout from the ground. <sup>37</sup>Wheat seeds and all other seeds look different from the sprouts that come up. <sup>38</sup>This is because God gives everything the kind of body he wants it to have

<sup>42</sup>That’s how it will be when our bodies are raised to life. These bodies will die, but the bodies that are raised will live forever. <sup>43</sup>These ugly and weak bodies will become beautiful and strong. <sup>44</sup>As surely as there are physical bodies, there are spiritual bodies. And our physical bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies.

<sup>50</sup>My friends, I want you to know that our bodies of flesh and blood will decay. This means that they cannot share in God’s kingdom, which lasts forever. <sup>51</sup>I will explain a mystery to you. Not every one of us will die, but we will all be changed. <sup>52</sup>It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. We will all be changed, so that we will never die again.

<sup>53</sup>Our dead and decaying bodies will be changed into bodies that won’t die or decay. <sup>54</sup>The bodies we

now have are weak and can die. But they will be changed into bodies that are eternal. Then the Scriptures will come true, “Death has lost the battle!

<sup>55</sup>Where is its victory? Where is its sting?”

<sup>56</sup>Sin is what gives death its sting, and the Law is the power behind sin. <sup>57</sup>But thank God for letting our Lord Jesus Christ give us the victory!

So this is our confident hope: THAT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS

In **2 Corinthians 5:1-6** Paul compares this life to living in a tent

- and the life to come to having a permanent dwelling

#### **2 Corinthians 5:4**

<sup>4</sup>While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it’s not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life.

- THERE IS LIFE AFTER LIFE ...

#### **CONCLUSION**

While these words may give us hope and a sense of expectation THERE IS STILL A HUGE ELEMENT OF THIS BEING SOMETHING UNKNOWN

I started by saying that life is book-ended by 2 traumatic events: BIRTH and DEATH

- AND FOR THE ONE WHO HAS PUT THEIR FAITH IN JESUS (**THE ONE WHO IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE**) THEY ARE VERY SIMILAR
- Let me explain ...

THIS IS OUR EXPECTATION ...

- That God’s Word is true, and that he has promised a life beyond our physical life here on earth

#### **Revelation 21:3–5**

God will make his home among his people. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, suffering, crying, or pain. These things of the past are gone forever.

<sup>5</sup>Then the one sitting on the throne said:

I am making everything new.

We may not have a perfect understanding of exactly what that is like

- But there is much that God has shown us
- From next week on we will be looking at what God has shown us in his Word

#### **1 Corinthians 2:9–10**

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”—

<sup>10</sup>but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

## HEAVEN STUDY - Part 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Colossians 3:1-2*

<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

This is not only a mental thing ... to set your minds to

- Not being captivated by alluring false stuff

#### BUT RATHER

- To set both mind and hearts on the world to come ...
- **WE ARE TO PONDER WHAT HEAVEN IS LIKE AND TO ALIGN OUR LIVES HERE ON EARTH ACCORDINGLY**

The great Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards, composed a set of life resolutions while he was still in his early 20s, one of which read: *Resolved, to endeavour to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.*

### THERE ARE THREE OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME WITH SETTING YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

**FIRST:** you also have to deal with the realities of death and dying

#### *Hebrews 2:14–15*

... that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup>and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Facing the realities of death are somewhat easier if we know what lies beyond

BUT THAT RAISES THE **SECOND** PROBLEM:

#### **2. THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES CORRECTLY AND TO TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY**

- Knowing WHAT DOES IN FACT LIE BEYOND

Most people are pretty vague about what to expect

#### *Revelation 21:3–4*

<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

#### *Isaiah 11:6–9*

<sup>6</sup>The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.

<sup>9</sup>They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

- **"BELIEVE WHAT YOU READ ... DO NOT READ WHAT YOU BELIEVE"**

John Eldredge (*The Journey of Desire*)

"Nearly every Christian I have spoken to has some idea that eternity is an unending church service ... We have settled on an image of that never-ending sing-along in the sky, one great hymn after another, forever and ever, amen. And our hearts sink. *Forever and ever? That's it? That's the good news?* And then we sigh, and feel guilty that we're not more 'spiritual'. We lose heart, and we turn once more to the present to find what life we can."

BUT DOESN'T SCRIPTURE TEACH US THAT WE CAN'T KNOW WHAT HEAVEN REALLY IS LIKE:

**1 Corinthians 2:9–10**

<sup>9</sup>However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"— <sup>10</sup>**BUT GOD HAS REVEALED IT TO US BY HIS SPIRIT.**

If we acknowledge the two key difficulties we will find that we are pleasantly surprised at what the Scriptures do teach us

1. Of needing great humility in our interpretation of Scripture
2. We reject the notion that the physical / material is bad and only what is "spiritual" can be good

**3. OVERCOME THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE PHYSICAL / MATERIAL WORLD IS BAD, AND THAT ONLY THE SPIRITUAL IS GOOD**

**HEAVEN IS A PLACE:**

A A Hodge:

*All Scripture representations of heaven involve the idea of a definite place, as well as a state of blessedness. ... It appears not improbable ... that this world will be reconstituted and gloriously adapted to be the permanent residence of Christ and his church.*

LOUIS BERKHOF:

*The final state of believers will be preceded by the passing of the present world, and the appearance of a new creation ... It must be said that Scripture clearly presents heaven as a place ... Scripture gives us reasons to believe that the righteous will not only inherit heaven, but the entire new creation. ... We should not think of heaven as something exclusively spiritual. There will be something corresponding to the body. There will be recognition and social intercourse on an elevated plane.*

J K Grider:

*What is existence in heaven to be like? ... The whole person survives in the Biblical teaching. Even the body is raised again, so that, if it is no longer flesh and blood, it nevertheless has a continuity with the present body, a sameness in form, if not in material element. ... So there is nothing in the Bible ... about disembodied spirits in the next world living 'in vacuo'.*

Even the most conservative of scholars tell us that heaven is not something spooky and intangible, but that it has a very material element to it

But what does the Bible say?

- **"Believe what you read ... not read what you believe"**

**Matthew 19:28**

<sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world (litt: *the recreation*), when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

**John 14:1–4**

<sup>1</sup>"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup>You know the way to the place where I am going."

**2 Peter 3:13**

<sup>13</sup>But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

**Revelation 21:1–4**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Notice a number of things:

- That both EARTH AND HEAVEN will change
- **2 Peter ... we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth**
- **Revelation 21 ... Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth**

**HERE'S A NEW THOUGHT:**

- **THAT WHEN WE DIE, THE HEAVEN THAT WE GO TO IS NOT THE HEAVEN IN WHICH WE WILL SPEND ETERNITY**

THERE IS AN INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN:

THERE IS AN ETERNAL HEAVEN:

- Which is the place where we will live forever after the final resurrection

## HEAVEN STUDY - Part 2

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Colossians 3:1–2*

<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

#### 1. GOD'S ORIGINAL, PERFECT CREATION WAS PHYSICAL PEOPLE INHABITING A MATERIAL WORLD

##### *Genesis 2:7–8*

<sup>7</sup>Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

#### 2. SIN CAUSED MAN TO BE BARRED FROM EDEN

That perfect environment was not destroyed ... man was just barred from it because of his sin

##### *Genesis 3:23–24*

<sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. <sup>24</sup>After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

#### 3. THIS CREATION IS WAITING FOR THE REVERSE OF THE CURSE

##### *Romans 8:19–22*

<sup>19</sup>The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

TIMOTHY KELLAR - Romans For You (pg. 36ff)

*There is a glory coming that will be so blindingly powerful that when it falls upon us, it will envelop the whole created order and glorify it along with us - we will bring nature along with us into a renewed, restored, redeemed reality.... Just as God cast Adam and Eve out of Eden, subjecting their lives to frustration, but also gave them hope of eventual reversal, so he subjected creation itself to imperfection, yet had a reversal and restoration in mind. This is why creation is able to wait "in eager expectation". ... but none of this is the last word. "The creation itself will be liberated ... and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God". (v. 21)*

*First, instead of frustration, there will be fulfilment. When we consider the majesty and greatness of the oceans, mountain, valleys, forests and so on **now**, it staggers the mind to imagine what the world will be like when it is free to be itself!*

*Second, instead of decay, there will be strength and newness.*

*Third, instead of pain, there is only joy.*

#### 4. THE EARTH WILL ONE DAY AGAIN REFLECT THE GLORY OF GOD

##### **Acts 3:21**

<sup>21</sup>He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

##### **Matthew 19:28**

<sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- That cannot happen if the earth is destroyed

RANDY ALCORN:

*The predominant belief that the ultimate heaven God prepares for us will be unearthly could not be more unbiblical. Earth was made for people to live on, and people were made to live on earth.*

##### **Habakkuk 2:14**

<sup>14</sup>For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

##### **Isaiah 65:17**

<sup>17</sup>"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth.

##### **Isaiah 66:22**

... the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD

##### **Revelation 21:1 - 3**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away ... <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ... <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

WAYNE GRUDEM:

*Christians often talk about living with God "in heaven, forever". But in fact the Biblical teaching is richer than that: it tells us there will be new heavens and a new earth - an entirely renewed creation - and we will live with God there ... There will also be a new kind of unification of heaven and earth ... There will be a joining of heaven and earth in this new creation"*

##### **Ephesians 1:9–10**

<sup>9</sup>And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

ANTHONY HOEKEMA:

*The 'new Jerusalem' does not remain in 'heaven' far off in space, but it comes down to the renewed earth; there the redeemed will spend eternity in resurrection bodies. So heaven and earth, now separated, will be merged: the new earth will also be heaven, **since God will dwell there with his people.. Glorified believers, in other words, will continue to be in heaven while they are inhabiting the new earth***

Heaven and earth are not opposites

- They are different in that earth as we know it is a distortion of the perfect which is heaven

### **2 Peter 3:10–13**

**<sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup>But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.**

We know about the original earth from the first 2 chapters in our Bible - Gen 1 & 2

We know most about the new earth from the last 2 chapters of our Bible - Rev 21 & 22

TO SUMMARISE:

- Heaven will be a material / physical place
- This will be a restoration of planet earth to the state of Eden before sin entered the world
- It's described as a **new earth** which will be so much better than what we currently experience (we will live in resurrected bodies)
- There will be a joining of God's 'home' (the spiritual heaven) with the new earth prepared for us
- God will choose to come and live with us on the renewed planet

### **Revelation 21:1–4**

**<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

### **CONCLUSION**

If what we've seen is what ETERNAL HEAVEN is like we also have to face that when we die, we go to be with the Lord

The heaven we go to when we die, is NOT the heaven in which we will spend eternity

- It's "heaven" in that it's to be present with the Lord - INTERIM HEAVEN
- But it's not where we will spend eternity - ETERNAL HEAVEN



## HEAVEN: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE

We're looking at what the Scriptures teach us about life after life

### **2 Corinthians 5:4**

**<sup>4</sup>For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.**

- We need to exercise great humility

Last week we looked at the coming together of the new heaven and new earth on a material planet ... the new earth

- BUT THAT WILL ONLY HAPPEN AT THE END OF TIME AS WE KNOW IT

### **SO WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO DIE BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN?**

There are very few people who will claim to have no apprehension about what happens after they die

- Even if there's no fear, there's apprehension about what is unknown

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13**

**<sup>13</sup>Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.**

- While it may not be that we have NO HOPE ...
- Nevertheless the fogginess ... the uncertainty ... leaves us feeling apprehensive

### **THE CLUES WE ARE GIVEN ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH**

#### **1. AFTER WE DIE WE WILL BE WITH JESUS**

There is a place we go to prior to our bodily resurrection which is ***better by far*** than what we presently know

### **Philippians 1:23**

**... I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far**

### **Luke 16:22-31**

**The rich man and Lazarus are both depicted as being alive after death**

### **Luke 23:43 ... to the thief on the cross**

**<sup>43</sup>Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."**

### **2 Corinthians 5:8**

**<sup>8</sup>We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:10**

**He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.**

- In **1 Thessalonians 4:13** he'd already said

**<sup>13</sup>Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep**

- a euphemism for dying ...

But then there are conclusions which we need to draw from other Scriptures:

### **1 Thessalonians 4:14**

For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, **GOD WILL BRING BACK WITH HIM THE BELIEVERS WHO HAVE DIED.**

- This passage is talking about Jesus return to earth at the end of the age
- If believers are to return with him, it seems clear that they must be with him now

In Hebrews we have the whole of chapter 11 listing the faithful who have died

### **Hebrews 12:1**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses ...

- these “witnesses” are alive now and following what’s happening on earth

**SCRIPTURE POINTS CLEARLY TO THESE TWO MAJOR EVENTS:**

- 1. BELIEVERS ACTUALLY MEETING JESUS WHEN WE DIE**
  - 2. PHYSICAL/BODILY RESURRECTION WHEN CHRIST RETURNS**
- To live with him on the new, regenerated earth

**SO WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN OUR DEATH AND CHRIST’S RETURN?**

**THERE IS AN INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN ... PRESENT HEAVEN**

“Intermediate Heaven” refers to the place where Christians go when they die.

- It is a temporary place, not to be confused with the Eternal Heaven, which is also known as the New Earth.
- The Intermediate Heaven is where we will be prior to our bodily resurrection.
- But when we die, we will be with the Lord and with one another forever.

The Intermediate Heaven is a realm separate from Earth.

- **BUT WE WILL NOT BE IN THE INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN FOREVER.**
- Instead, we will look forward to Christ’s return to earth, our bodily resurrection, and our new home in the Eternal Heaven - the New Earth.
- IT IS NOT OUR FINAL DESTINATION

**WHERE DOES THE CONCEPT OF AN INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN COME FROM?**

IT’S A THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSION - speculation - that is drawn from the 2 facts we’ve just looked at:

1. That when we die, we go immediately into the Lord’s presence
  2. That the final resurrection of the body has not yet happened but will happen in some time to come
- SO THERE IS A TIME GAP ... hence, an INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN

**THE PRESENT - INTERMEDIATE - HEAVEN** is a temporary lodging, a waiting place, until the return of Christ and our bodily resurrection

- NOT purgatory ... a RC doctrine about a place of refinement
- Not a place of "soul sleep"
- Scripture makes it clear that we are conscious after life on this planet:

*Randy Alcorn*

*Every reference in Revelation to human beings talking and worshiping in heaven prior to the resurrection of the dead demonstrates that our spiritual beings are conscious, not sleeping, after death.*

### **WHAT WILL THIS HEAVEN BE LIKE?**

In **REVELATION 6** John is given insight into a scene in heaven

OBJECTION: ... BUT THIS IS APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE!!

- But while Revelation may be apocalyptic, not everything written is a figure of speech or symbolic
- Often we have preconceived ideas about what a passage must mean
- We're **READING WHAT WE BELIEVE** ... not **BELIEVING WHAT WE READ**

But Revelation 6 gives us a glimpse into what actually happens in heaven:

- (This does not appear to be a figure of speech ... or to have symbolism)

#### ***Revelation 6:9–11***

**<sup>9</sup>When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony. <sup>10</sup>They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?" <sup>11</sup>Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters—their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred—had joined them.**

- This is all before Christ's return and the resurrection of the body
- They were visible
- They spoke / shouted
- They knew what was happening on earth
- They were clothed (white robes)
- They were anxious and told to rest
- **THIS IS A VERY REALISTIC SCENE**

The implication from that passage is that martyrs in heaven are aware of what is going on on earth, and they're asking God when he's going to intervene

- If that is true for those who were martyred, why not for other believers as well
- **CONCLUSION:** They are in **HEAVEN** - but not the final new earth/heaven

#### ***2 Corinthians 5:1–4***

**<sup>1</sup>Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. <sup>2</sup>Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup>because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.**

- Paul uses the comparison between a tent and a permanent house to illustrate the difference between our earthly bodies and our heavenly bodies
- We are not "naked" spirits ... this implies some form of body
- Which is clothed with something permanent

Another passage to consider is

**Luke 15:10**

<sup>10</sup>**In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

- Not as, mistakenly, so often thought the angels rejoicing
- But OTHERS (Believers?) rejoicing in the presence of the angels

JESUS RESURRECTION BODY IS THE PROTOTYPE FOR OURS

**Philippians 3:20–21**

**The Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

**1 John 3:2**

<sup>2</sup>**Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

**1 Corinthians 15:49** – contrasting Adam and Jesus

<sup>49</sup>**And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.**

The impression we get from these passages is that there is a "Heaven" where Jesus is

- That believers appear there once they die
- That they will bodily experiences
- But that is not the final / eternal "Heaven"
- BELIEVERS ARE TO RETURN WITH JESUS WHEN HE RETURNS AND AT THAT TIME THERE WILL BE A BODILY RESURRECTION FROM THE GRAVE

Here's a new thought: This means that "**HEAVEN**" **CHANGES**

- Only GOD is eternal an unchanging ... so heaven is a created space
- Why should it not change ... as the earth does and will
- There will be a new heaven ...
- Unchanging heaven is one of those assumptions we make

RANDY ALCORN

*Because God created heaven it had a beginning and is therefore neither timeless, nor changeless. It had a past (prior to Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection), it has a present (the intermediate heaven, where believers go when they die) and it will have a future (the eternal heaven, or new earth).*

**ONCE WE ABANDON THE THOUGHT THAT HEAVEN CANNOT CHANGE, IT FITS INTO PLACE MUCH EASIER**

So when someone asks whether someone who has died is in "HEAVEN"

- The answer is YES!! ... and NO!!
- Yes – in the Intermediate Heaven
- No – not yet in the Eternal Heaven = the New Earth

But what will life be like in this INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN?

- It will be a bodily experience in the presence of Jesus
- We need Biblically inspired imagination
- Sanctified speculation ... that gives hope
- We don't really know
- WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE

## LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN

**Colossians 3:1–2** (NASB)

<sup>1</sup>Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

<sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Seeking to fill our hearts and minds with heaven is what we've been doing in this mini-series on heaven ...  
BUT WHAT EXACTLY DO WE HAVE IN MIND TO SEEK?

When it comes to thinking of HEAVEN – our eternal home – we often fail to think Biblically

- Unbiblical stereotypes keep us from believing that Heaven is our true home
- Our anticipation is diminished
- But the eternal heaven ... the NEW EARTH ... is our true home

RANDY ALCORN

*The unbiblical stereotypes of heaven as a vague, incorporeal existence hurt us more than we realise. Among other things, they diminish our anticipation of heaven and keep us from believing it is truly our home.*

HEAVEN WILL NOT BE A GHOSTLY, SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

**THE ETERNAL HEAVEN WILL BE A RENEWED EARTH, EXPERIENCED IN RESURRECTED BODIES**

**2 Peter 3:13**

<sup>13</sup>But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

- when Jesus returns, we will experience a redeemed, recreated, material NEW EARTH
- This will be a restoration of planet earth to the state of Eden before sin entered the world
- It's described as a new earth which will be so much better than what we currently experience (we will live in resurrected bodies)
- There will be a joining of God's 'home' (the spiritual heaven) with the new earth prepared for us
- God will choose to come and live with us on the renewed planet
- God will come to live with us ... not take us to live with him
- It will be more spectacular, glorious than we can imagine
- enjoying it with resurrected, redeemed, material bodies

Ultimately for all of us to be in RESURRECTED bodies, on a RESURRECTED earth, in RESURRECTED friendships, enjoying a RESURRECTED culture with a RESURRECTED Jesus

- THAT WILL BE COMING HOME!

But that the gap between us dying and going to appear in Jesus' presence, and the resurrection of our bodies implies an INTERMEDIATE HEAVEN

- we've looked at the CLUES Scripture gives to us
- this means that heaven changes

We need to stop acting as if Heaven were a myth ... an impossible dream

- A relentlessly dull meeting ... an unimportant distraction from real life

- HEAVEN IS THE REALM MADE FOR US
- OUR PAIN AND SUFFERING MAY OR MAY NOT BE RELIEVED IN THIS PRESENT LIFE ... BUT IT CERTAINLY WILL BE IN THE NEXT

**Luke 6:22–23**

<sup>22</sup>Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.

**James 1:2–4**

<sup>2</sup>Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. <sup>3</sup>For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. <sup>4</sup>So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

**1 Peter 4:13**

<sup>13</sup>But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

ANTICIPATING HEAVEN DOESN'T ELIMINATE PAIN, BUT IT LESSENS IT AND PUTS IT IN PERSPECTIVE

**Romans 8:20–25**

<sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in HOPE <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup>Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this HOPE we were saved. But HOPE that is seen is no HOPE at all. Who HOPES for what he already has? <sup>25</sup>But if we HOPE for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Often used this picture of a Christian's death: **written by Henry Van Dyke sometime in the 19th century.**  
*I am standing by the seashore.*

*A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.*

*She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sun and sky come down to mingle with each other.*

*Then someone at my side says, 'There she goes!*

*Goes? Gone? Gone where? Gone from my sight – that is all.*

*She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the places of destination.*

*Her diminished size is in me, not in her.*

*And just at the moment when someone at my side says, 'There she goes!', there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout : 'Here she comes!'*

WE SEE LIFE DIFFERENTLY WHEN WE REALISE THAT DEATH ISN'T A WALL, BUT A TURNSTILE

HS Laird's father, a Christ loving man, lay dying. His son asked, "Dad, how do you feel?"

His father replied, "I feel like a little boy on Christmas eve!"

- Christmas is coming
- We live between the first Christmas and the second.
- We walk on disputed earth between Eden and the New Earth
- That dispute will soon be settled
- Christ will forever reign over the universe, and we will reign with him

## **DEATH IS MERELY THE DOORWAY TO ETERNAL LIFE**

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER just before he was hanged by the Nazis:

"Oh God, this is the end; but for me it is just the beginning."

Calvin Miller:

*I once scorned ev'ry fearful thought of death,  
When it was but the end of pulse and breath,  
But now my eyes have seen that past the pain  
There is a world that's waiting to be claimed.  
Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart,  
For living's such a temporary art.  
Andy dying is but getting dressed for God,  
Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.*

Death is sometimes – maybe often - painful ... it's the enemy

- But for those who know Jesus, it is the FINAL pain, the LAST enemy

### **1 Corinthians 15:25–26**

<sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

### **Isaiah 25:7–8**

<sup>7</sup>On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;

<sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

### **1 Corinthians 15:54–55**

<sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

<sup>55</sup>"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Ask yourself, "What's the worst that death can do to me?"

### **Romans 8:35, 38-39**

<sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,



<sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Not only will death not separate us from Christ, IT WILL USHER US INTO HIS PRESENCE**

- Then at the final resurrection, Christ will demonstrate his power and turn death on it's head
- **Make FOREVER ALIVE what appeared to be FOREVER BURIED**

God LOVES those who are destined for Heaven

- BUT HE IS **PROUD** OF THOSE WHO ARE HEAVEN MINDED:

Talking about those faithful who suffered and died for their faith:

**Hebrews 11:13–16**

<sup>13</sup>All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

<sup>14</sup>For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

<sup>15</sup>And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

<sup>16</sup>But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore **GOD IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD; for He has prepared a city for them.**

- Our lives on earth are a training camp to get us ready for heaven

**Galatians 6:7–8**

<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup>The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

**2 Peter 3:11–14**

What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup>as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. ... in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Recognising that there's a wonderful future life on a resurrected Earth can empower us

- To remain hopeful and courageous through illness
- To struggle through a difficult marriage
- Persevere in caring for an ailing parent, or child or spouse
- Stay with a demanding job

**WE NEED TO BE REALISTS AND THE REALITY IS THAT THIS WORLD IS NOT ALL THAT THERE IS**

- There is so much more and better to come
- All suffering because of the curse of sin will end
- **KNOWING THAT OUR SUFFERING WILL BE RELIEVED DOESN'T MAKE IT EASY, BUT IT DOES MAKE IT BEARABLE**

TO BE HEAVEN ORIENTED IS TO BE GOAL ORIENTED IN THE BEST SENSE

***Philippians 3:13–14***

<sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

RESULTING IN HUGE GRATITUDE, THANKFULNESS AND WORSHIP OF GOD

***Hebrews 12:28***

<sup>28</sup>Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

These are the words of King Jesus given to his friend John:

***Revelation 21:1, 3-5***

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ...

<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

<sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

**THREE ERAS OF MANKIND AND EARTH**

<b>PAST</b> <b>Genesis 1-2</b>	<b>PRESENT</b> <b>Genesis 3 - Revelation 20</b>	<b>FUTURE</b> <b>Revelation 21-22</b>
Original mankind	Fallen mankind; Some believe and are transformed	Resurrected mankind
Original earth	Fallen earth, with glimmers of the original	New (resurrected) earth
God delegates reign to innocent mankind	Disputed reign, with God, Satan, and fallen mankind	God delegates reign to righteous mankind
Mankind given dominion with intended stewardship of Earth	Mankind's dominion thwarted, frustrated and twisted	Mankind's dominion fulfilled; redeemed stewardship of Earth
God in Heaven, visiting Earth	God in Heaven, separate yet active (indwells believers by His Spirit)	God living forever with mankind on the New Earth
No Curse (universal perfection and blessing)	Sin and the Curse (withdrawal of blessing, or blessing selectively given, plus common grace)	No more Curse (greater blessing, deeper perfection, grace unending)
No shame	Shame	No shame or potential for shame
Tree of life in Eden (mankind can eat)	Tree of life in Paradise (mankind cut off from)	Tree of Life in New Jerusalem (mankind can eat again forever)
River of life	Rivers of nature, with glimmers of past and future	River of life flows from the throne
Before redemption	Unfolding drama of redemption	After redemption
Sin unknown	Sin corrupts; its power and penalty assaulted, defeated by Christ	Sin forever removed
No death	Death permeates all	Death forever removed
Mankind created from the earth	Mankind dies, returns to the earth; new life to some	Mankind resurrected from the earth to live on the New Earth

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PAST</b>  <b>Genesis 1-2</b>  First Adam reigns</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRESENT</b>  <b>Genesis 3 - Revelation 20</b>  First Adam falls; mankind reigns corruptly, with glimpses of good; second Adam comes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FUTURE</b>  <b>Revelation 21-22</b>  Second Adam reigns as God-man, with mankind as co-heirs and delegated kings</p>
Serpent, Satan, on Earth	Serpent, Satan, judged but still present on Earth	Serpent, Satan, removed from Earth, thrown into eternal fire
God walking with humans in the garden	Humans cut off from God	God dwells face-to-face with humans
God's glory evident to all, in all	God's glory obscured, seen in glimpses	God's glory forever manifested in all
Unhindered individual worship	Worship hampered by sin	Unhindered corporate worship
God's goodness known	God's goodness known by some, doubted by others	God's goodness forever celebrated
Creation and mankind perfect	Creation and mankind tainted by sin	Creation and mankind restored to perfection
Mankind names, tends, rules the animals	Animals and mankind hurt each other	Animals and mankind live in complete harmony
Ground fertile, vegetation lush	Ground cursed, vegetation diseased	Ground fertile, vegetation thrives
Abundant food and water	Hunger and thirst, toil for food and water	Abundant food and water
Restfulness, satisfaction in labour	Restlessness, toil in labour	Enhanced restfulness, joy in labour
Innocence, closeness to God	Sin (alienation from God); some declared righteous in Christ	Righteousness (intimacy with God); complete righteousness in Christ
Paradise	Paradise lost, sought; glimmers seen, foretastes	Paradise regained and magnified
Mankind in ideal place	Mankind banished, struggles and wanders in fallen place(s)	Man restored to ideal place

<b>PAST</b> <b>Genesis 1-2</b>	<b>PRESENT</b> <b>Genesis 3 - Revelation 20</b>	<b>FUTURE</b> <b>Revelation 21-22</b>
Mankind able either to sin or not to sin	Mankind enslaved to sin, empowered not to sin	Mankind unable to sin, permanently empowered
Naked in innocence	Clothed due to unrighteousness	Clothed with righteousness
One marriage (Adam and Eve)	Many marriages	One marriage (Christ and church)
Marriage perfect	Marriage flawed by sin, blame, manipulation	Marriage perfect, unhindered
Beginning of human culture	Contamination and advancement of culture	Purification and eternal expansion of culture
Mankind learns, creates in purity	Mankind learns, creates in impurity (Cain, Babel)	Mankind learns, created in wisdom and purity
Mankind rules and expands Paradise	Mankind banished from Paradise, longs for return to Paradise	Mankind has unlimited, free access to Paradise
God's plan for mankind and Earth revealed	God's plan delayed and enriched	God's plan for mankind and Earth realized