

# **The World's Greatest Future**

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*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.*

Philippians 3:20-21

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## **Introduction**

What does my future hold? This is a common question that many people wonder about. You may have thought about the following questions at some point in your life. Where will I live? What job will I have? Who will I marry? Will I be healthy? Some questions are more fixed to the current day. Will my presentation go well? Will I do well in my interview? Will I get good results from my test? No matter if it is thinking about what will happen in the next couple of hours or what will happen years from now, we like to know that our future looks promising.

People often try to plan for what the future will bring and also try to make the right decisions so they can have the best future. Making plans can help us feel better because we do not really know what the future holds. Having an uncertain future can create stress and anxiety. We may not know what our earthly future holds, but we can have great peace from knowing that God holds the future.

There is only one person that knows the future for certain and that is God. Christians can have confidence that God will guide, direct, and protect us in our time on earth.

We may not be sure of our own plan for life and what it will bring, but we can draw strength from God's promise that He has a plan for us. *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11.

God has a plan for you today, tomorrow, and in to your future. He always has something for you; a key for every problem, a light for every shadow, a relief for every sorrow, and a plan for every tomorrow. We may not know what our earthly future will hold, but every Christian has the joy and certain hope of life everlasting in heaven!

God provides us with the world's greatest future. There is nothing that can compare on earth with what we will experience in heaven. God has promised that He is preparing a place for you and me. In heaven there will be no more sin, suffering, or sadness. Our bodies will be transformed with no weaknesses or diseases. This promised future of our permanent home in heaven brings great joy and anticipation! *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.* Philippians 3:20-21.

This book will describe what is known about heaven and provide answers to common questions about heaven. Bible verses, hymns, and the writings and experiences of Christians will be discussed. When something is mentioned twice in the Bible it is important, even more so the more times it is mentioned. The Bible has over 500 references to heaven! God wants us to know that He has our future in His hands. Our future is wonderful, great, and will be beyond our imagination!

Consider this glimpse into life in heaven. In heaven there is no more suffering or death or mourning or crying or pain (Revelation 21:4). In heaven there is absolute safety and eternal security within the high, thick walls (Revelation 21:12,17). Heaven is a home that is stable and unshakable with firm foundations (Revelation 21:14). In heaven there is no more night or darkness (Revelation 21:25). Heaven is where God's people gather to worship Him forever and ever (Revelation 7:9). In heaven we will serve God and see His face (Revelation 22:4). We will have a relationship with God

that is pure and perfect without any sin (Revelation 21:5).

Certainly this is the greatest future!

In our time on earth we can keep our focus on God, His love, and the sure promise of heaven. We need to avoid being impacted by worldly influences. In the movie, *Collateral Beauty*, Will Smith plays a character that is a successful advertising executive. He describes that to get people to buy something you need to remember three things: love, time, and death. Everyone is looking for love each day, they want more time, and are afraid of death. That is what you tap into in order to sell things to people.

Christians know that there is nothing that you can buy that will have a permanent impact on love, time, and a fear of death. The best way to take care of all three is to keep our hearts and minds fixed on God. God loves us with a self-sacrificing, unending love. God loves us so much that He gives us the free gift of eternal life in heaven with Him. In heaven, we will have unlimited time as we will live for eternity with God. Because of this, we have no need to fear death. When our time on earth is complete, we will be welcomed into heaven with open arms. You might say this is

the most successful advertising campaign ever. It is a message that has connected with billions of people. The message has power because it is from God. His Word is trustworthy and true.

Since heaven will be beyond our imagination there are many things about heaven that we do not know. We can trust that God is all-knowing and wants only the best for us. Seventeenth century pastor Richard Baxter adeptly describes what our mindset to heaven can be.

My knowledge of that life is small,  
The eye of faith is dim,  
But it's enough that Christ knows all,  
And I shall be with him.

For those who have learned to love and trust in God as their Savior, the promise of meeting Him face to face and being with Him forever is hope that keeps us going, no matter what life may throw at us.

Life at times can be difficult, but Christians know that our time on earth is brief compared to the eternity that we will spend in heaven. We also know we can draw strength from the words in Romans 5:3-5. *We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and*

*character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

In his ministry and preaching Billy Graham met many people who had to deal with difficulty, suffering, and pain. Several years before Graham died he talked about how his faith in God has been his strong foundation throughout life. He strived to have other people come to know this hope, peace, and strength as well.

“I am now an old man. More and more, I cling to the hope of the gospel message that I have preached all over the world. I have preached in times of relative peace and in times of great world crisis, to people in materialistic plenty and to people in great poverty, in countries of political stability and in regions torn by civil war and social strife—many different faces, circumstances, and histories, but all with the same foundational need to know God. Across the changes of a lifetime, I continue to return to the one sure foundation that has undergirded me since I first began: trust in a loving God who never changes, who invites us to draw close to Him in Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Graham believed in God's promise of free grace and received God's great free gift of heaven. Likewise, we can keep our hearts and minds focused on God's love and the sure promise of heaven. When we have a heavenly focus in our time on earth it changes everything. We realize what really matters and strive to use our time, talents, and treasures to glorify God so that more people come to know God as their Savior. God can use us to invite more people to saving faith in Him and an amazing future in heaven. Heaven is the world's greatest future!

## **Chapter 1: Is heaven real?**

Is heaven real? The answer is a resounding yes! Jesus clearly states that eternal life in heaven is freely given to those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16. God keeps His promises and His love is unchanging. *The word of the Lord endures forever.* 1 Peter 1:25.

We can have full confidence that heaven is real and that God is preparing a place for Christians. Jesus provides reassurance to alleviate any doubts in John 14:1-3. *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 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.”* We can trust God’s Word and that He desires for us to have eternal life in heaven. There are a number of points as well that provide further proof that the Bible is true and that heaven is real.

## **Historically accurate**

The Bible is a historically accurate book. It passes and exceeds the test of authenticity that is done on any historical document. Jesus' ministry on earth has been estimated to have been in the 20s and 30s A.D. The Gospels were written in the first century A.D. as well by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This was still within the lifetimes of various eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus who could have pointed out any inaccuracies. For comparison the two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great were written more than 400 years after his death in 323 B.C.; yet they are considered to be generally trustworthy.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Edwin Yamauchi, one of the leading experts in ancient history, has noted that there is better and more timely historical documentation of Christianity than any other religion. Dr. Craig Blomberg, one of the foremost experts on the Gospels, provides further support. He states, "I know from my own research that there's very strong evidence for the trustworthiness of the gospel accounts."<sup>1</sup>

The evidence for the Gospel accounts has been analyzed by a British high court judge, Sir Edward Clarke, to

see if it would meet the criteria for a positive verdict. Clarke concluded, "To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. As a lawyer I accept the gospel evidence unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts that they were able to substantiate."<sup>1</sup>

The cornerstone of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Christ recorded in the Gospels. The Apostle Paul noted that, *if Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.* 1 Corinthians 15:17. In this sense, making a case for the truth of the resurrection also makes a case for the reliability and truth of the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Thanks be to God that Jesus did die on the cross and gloriously rose three days later to pay the price for our sins!

Archaeology, the study of history through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artifacts, also provides support for the trustworthiness of the Bible. The *Archaeological Study Bible* presents many notes and articles documenting how archeology has again and again proven the Bible does correspond to historical reality.<sup>3</sup> Dr. John McRay, professor of archaeology, was asked if archaeology

affirms or undermines the New Testament. “Oh, there’s no question that the credibility of the New Testament is enhanced.”<sup>1</sup>

The quantity of New Testament manuscripts that have been found is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1,000 manuscripts in other languages. In addition, there are tens of thousands of citations of New Testament passages by the early church fathers. In contrast, the number of existing manuscript copies of the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Caesar ranges from one to twenty.<sup>4</sup>

There is also evidence that great care was taken when copies of the Bible were made. The Jewish scribes held great reverence toward the Scriptures and there was a meticulous process in making a copy of the Bible to minimize the possibility of even the slightest error. The letters, words, and lines were counted for the Old Testament. If a single mistake was discovered, the entire manuscript was destroyed.<sup>4</sup> In total, the trustworthiness and accuracy of the Bible has excellent support.

## **The Bible is consistent**

The internal consistency of the Bible provides further support for its truthfulness. The Bible is remarkably self-consistent, despite having been written by more than forty different writers over a timespan of about 2,000 years. God's moral law, human's rebellion against God's law, and God's plan of salvation are continuing themes throughout the Bible.

Astrophysicist, Dr. Jason Lisle, notes the result of reading, studying, and discussing the Bible. "The truth of the Bible is obvious to anyone willing to fairly investigate it. The Bible is uniquely self-consistent and extraordinarily authentic. It has changed the lives of millions of people who have placed their faith in Christ. It has been confirmed countless times by archaeology and other sciences. It possesses divine insight into the nature of the universe and has made correct predictions about distant future events with perfect accuracy. When Christians read the Bible, they cannot help but recognize the voice of their Creator."<sup>5</sup>

## **Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled**

Many prophecies in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament by Jesus. For example, Micah 5:2 states the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. In the New Testament we read in Matthew 2:1 that Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem. For another example, Isaiah 53:5-12 notes the Messiah would take on the punishment for our sins. In the New Testament, Romans 5:8 describes that Jesus did pay the price for our sins. *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

It was no accident that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Jesus came to earth to be our Savior because of His great love for us. The probability of Jesus fulfilling eight of the prophecies is one in one hundred billion. You could take this number of silver dollars and cover the state of Texas to a depth of two feet and then see if a person could luckily pick the one right coin.<sup>1</sup> Jesus fulfilled not just eight prophecies but over forty! It was not luck that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, it was because God is all-powerful and in control.

Princeton professor Sir Norman Anderson describes what conclusion must be made. "I would argue that the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead is not at all improbable. In fact, based on the evidence, it's the best explanation for what happened."<sup>1</sup> God freely gives us the amazing gift of eternal life in heaven. *Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.* Psalm 68:19-20. Jesus did rise from the dead and because of this we know that death is not the end for us, but is the start of a beautiful beginning in heaven!

### **Dedicated disciples**

The disciples of Jesus had seen firsthand that He was indeed the Messiah. They witnessed Jesus perform miracles and teach with great authority. The disciples also saw Jesus after He was resurrected. They took to heart Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19-20. *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

The disciples were willing to die for their beliefs because they knew that Jesus was the Savior and that heaven was real. Only one of the disciples, John, is thought to have died a natural death. The others were killed for spreading the Gospel message. And share the Gospel message they did. The disciples preached the Good News of salvation in Rome, what is now the Soviet Union, Greece, modern-day Turkey, Syria, India, North Africa, Asia Minor, Persia, and Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup> The power of the Gospel message was seen as God used the disciples to bring more people to saving faith.

The Gospel message has brought many to faith and still does today. Dr. Craig Blomberg, one of the foremost experts on the Gospels, describes the power of God's Word. "There are plenty of stories of scholars in the New Testament field who have not been Christians, yet through their study of these very issues have come to faith in Christ. And there have been countless more scholars, already believers, whose faith has been made stronger, more solid, more grounded, because of the evidence."<sup>1</sup>

One of the people that has come to faith through studying the Bible is Lee Strobel. Strobel was an atheist for

much of his life. In his book, *The Case for Christ*, he describes his inquiry into the Christian faith. He became a Christian through studying God's Word. He summarized that, "We can proceed with bold assurance, thanks to the evidence of history that established convincing clarity how Jesus not only preceded us in death but also came back from the dead and blazed the trail to heaven."<sup>1</sup> God's Word has power and changes lives every day for the better.

### **Glimpses of heaven**

In the book of Revelation, the disciple John writes about the glimpse of heaven that was revealed to him. I believe that God has provided glimpses of heaven to others as well to further strengthen the faith of believers and to bring new people to faith.

In the book, *Heaven is for Real*, Todd Burpo describes his son Colton's glimpse into heaven. Colton had a life threatening emergency when his appendix ruptured. He needed emergency surgery and by the time he went into surgery there was little chance that he would survive. Colton did recover though, and as the months go on after the

surgery, he shared with his parents what he experienced in the operating room.

Colton left his body during the operation and saw his parents in two different rooms in the hospital. This was true as his dad went into a different room in the hospital to vent at God. He was mad at God because he thought Colton was going to die. Colton described that he saw the entrance to heaven and heard the sound of angels singing. He tells his dad that he met his dad's grandfather and is able to identify him from a picture that Todd has. Colton also shares that he met his other sister. Colton's mom lost a daughter in a miscarriage but his parents never told Colton about this.<sup>7</sup>

Millions of people have read about Colton's experience and watched the movie based on the book. God provided Colton a glimpse into heaven to bring more people to faith in Him by believing that heaven is indeed real.

### **God is consistent and dependable**

God's promises do not change so we can trust that His wonderful promise of eternal life in heaven will never be taken away. Hebrews 13:8 provides this reassurance. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* In a changing

world, we can draw great hope and strength in our unchanging God.

There was an old retired music professor who moved into an apartment. Every day, one of his neighbors, a young man in his twenties would check in on the professor. He would always ask, "What's the good word of the day?" The professor would then always pull out his tuning fork and hit the metal part of his wheelchair with it. He would then put the tuning fork up to his ear and say, "That is a middle C. The piano above is out of tune and the singer below us sings flat, but that is a middle C."

It is good to have things that are consistent in our lives. Things that we can depend on, don't change, and that we can trust. God is that middle C in our lives. He is always the same. He does not change. He is dependable. He does what He promises.

A man was eating at a restaurant and it came time to pay. He asked for the bill and was surprised to hear that the bill was covered. The server simply stated, "He took care of it," pointing at a man at a nearby table. When judgement day comes, we will be held accountable for all of our sins. It

is not something to fear though. When it comes time to be judged for our sins, there will be no record of them. We know that we can point at Jesus and say, “He took care of it.” Jesus is our Savior who takes away the sins of the world!

There is an old saying that Christianity promises you two things; that your life will have meaning and that you will live forever. And if you get a better offer, you should take it. There will never be a better offer. Jesus paid the price for our sins through his death and glorious resurrection three days later. His great love for us provides us eternal life in heaven!

As Christians, we know the Good News that leads to eternal salvation. English physicist, Michael Faraday, clearly states this belief drawing on the beautiful words of Job 19:25-27. Heaven is real! “Speculations? I know nothing about speculations. I’m resting on certainties. I know that my Redeemer lives, and because He lives, I shall live also.”

I know that my redeemer lives,  
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.  
And after my skin has been destroyed,  
yet in my flesh I will see God;  
I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another.  
How my heart yearns within me!  
Job 19:25-27

## **Chapter 2: How do you get to heaven?**

There is a joke about a man who dies and goes to the gates of heaven. The Apostle Peter meets him at the pearly gates and tells the man, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You can tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart."

"That's wonderful," says Peter, "that's worth three points!"

"Three points?" the man stated confused. "Well here's more, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service."

"Terrific!" says Peter, "that's certainly worth two points."

"Two points? How about this: I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," notes Peter.

"TWO POINTS!!" the man cries, "At this rate the only way I get into heaven is by the grace of God!"

"Come on in!" exclaimed Peter.

This made-up story illustrates the amazing blessing of being a Christian. We receive eternal life in heaven not based on our good deeds but solely by the grace of God through belief in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Ephesians 2:8-9 states this well. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* We do good works in response to God's love, not to earn salvation.

All other religions are works-based. People have to do enough of the right things to avoid punishment. Christianity is grace-based. Those who are unfamiliar with Christianity or new to Christianity can find this hard to comprehend. I went to a concert several years ago and the singer talked a little bit before singing a song about love. He described that, "The number of teeth on a shark is equal to the number of seeds on a strawberry which is the same as

the number of seams on a baseball.” He then followed that up by noting, “That is not true, but love does not always make sense either.”

God is all powerful and perfect. We are weak and sinful. It does not make sense that God would love us so much. Yet, God showed His amazing love to us by sending Jesus to earth to pay the price for our sins. We deserve death, but instead Jesus died in our place. Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death and the devil for all time! We now have been freely given eternal life. *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23. This is Good News that we should talk about, share, and discuss often.

There is a joke that makes the point about the importance of talking about how Christians can get to heaven. A Sunday school teacher was talking to her class about how to get into heaven. She asked the class, “If I sold my car, had a big garage sale, and gave all the money to the church, would that get me into heaven?”

“No!” the children all answered.

“If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven?” inquired the teacher.

Again the class’s answer was, “No!”

“Well, then, if I was kind to animals and always showed love to my family, would that get me into heaven?” the teacher asked the class.

Once more they all answered, “No!”

The teacher was impressed and noted, “These are all good things to do in response to God’s love, but how do we get into heaven then?”

Before anyone had a chance to answer, a five-year-old boy shouted out, “You gotta be dead!”

The boy’s response was partially true but was missing the important part about how get to heaven. This humorous joke makes the point that we need to talk about grace often so that we take to heart how to get to heaven and reflect on what God’s great grace means for our lives. We can remember and share three points: Jesus paid it all, we are saved by grace, and there is no need to doubt.

## Jesus paid it all

Because of our sins, we deserve death. Jesus took the punishment for all of our sins by dying on the cross. When Jesus uttered His last words on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He was letting all know that the debt had been paid in full. The Greek word translated, "it is finished", is *tetelestai*, which means paid in full. Jesus' ultimate sacrifice and glorious resurrection three days later accomplished what no human was capable of doing. Jesus washed away all our sins so that we might receive the righteousness of God. *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."* 1 Peter 2:24. Jesus rescued us so that we could be children of God. Praise be to Jesus for His amazing love and sacrifice for us!

A great hymn to sing and remember is, "Jesus Paid it All." The lyrics have a good connection with Isaiah 1:18 and how we need to solely rely on Christ for salvation. *"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."* Isaiah 1:18.

## Jesus Paid it All

I hear the Savior say,  
"Thy strength indeed is small,  
Child of weakness, watch and pray,  
Find in Me thine all in all."

Refrain:

Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

Lord, now indeed I find  
Thy pow'r, and Thine alone,  
Can change the leper's spots  
And melt the heart of stone.

For nothing good have I  
Where-by Thy grace to claim;  
I'll wash my garments white  
In the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

And when, before the throne,  
I stand in Him complete,  
"Jesus died my soul to save,"  
My lips shall still repeat.<sup>2</sup>

### **Saved by grace**

Christians are saved by grace. Grace is unmerited love and favor given to us by God. Max Lucado describes it this way, "*Jesus*: Five letters. Six hours. One cross. Three nails. We live because he does, hope because he works, and matter because he matters. To be saved by grace is to be saved by him."<sup>1</sup> God's grace and forgiveness is a marvelous

gift to us. The wonderful hymn, “Grace Greater than Our Sin,” summarizes it well.

Grace, grace God’s grace,  
grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
grace, grace, God’s grace,  
grace that is greater than all our sin.<sup>5</sup>

There is nothing we can do earn to heaven. We need to just believe in Jesus as our Savior. God freely gives us His grace. Poet Deborah Ann Belka has a poem that describes the view that Christians can take.

There’s Nothing I Can Do

There is nothing I can do,  
no magic door to enter in  
if I want to get to heaven  
there’s no lottery, I can win.

There is nothing I can do,  
I couldn’t purchase my way  
Even if I had a trillion dollars  
To compensate for my stay.

There is nothing I can do,  
to reserve a room for me  
none of my works on earth  
comes with such a guarantee.

There is nothing I can do,  
to enter God’s kingdom  
no way for me to earn  
the access or the freedom.

There is nothing I can do,  
for Jesus paid the full price.  
I believe He died for my sins  
that's all I need to suffice!

### **No need for doubt**

Author Anne Graham Lotz's mom told her a story when she was young to reinforce that we can have 100 percent certainty that heaven is our home. This story is a true story. A young boy who lived in London, England heard that the great American evangelist, Dr. D.L. Moody, was coming to London to preach. The boy walked all the way across the city in order to hear Dr. Moody's message.

When he drew near to the church, he saw that it was situated on a hill. The sun was setting, and the colors of the sunset were reflected in the multifaceted stained glass windows, making them look as though they were glowing. The sound of hundreds of voices joined by a powerful pipe organ drifted toward him. The church looked and sounded like heaven to him. He forgot how tired he was, and he ran all the way up the long granite staircase that led to the front door.

As he reached the main door, a big hand grasped him firmly by the shoulder and spun him around. "What do you think you're doing, laddie?" demanded a tall, severe-looking deacon.

The little boy told him he had walked all the way across the city in order to hear Dr. Moody. The keeper of the door looked the little boy up and down from head to toe, taking in the uncombed hair, the unwashed face, the dirty feet, and the unclean clothes. He then retorted, "Not you, sonny. You're too dirty to go inside. Be gone."

The little boy threw his head back, squared his shoulders, and set off with a determined gait to find another way inside the church. But the other doors were locked and the windows were too high to climb through. Dejected, he went back to the front steps, sat down, and began to cry.

Just then he was distracted by a carriage that pulled up to the foot of the steps. Out bounded a distinguished-looking gentleman who marched quickly up the steps. He stopped when he came near to the little boy, noticing his tear-streaked face. "What's the matter, son?" he inquired. The little boy explained that he had walked all the way

across London to hear Dr. Moody, only to find out he was too dirty to go inside the church. The gentlemen looked at him kindly, then extended his hand. "Here. Put your hand in mine." The boy thought about it for a moment, then he slipped his little hand into the big man's grasp.

Hand in hand they walked up the steps of the church. When they came to the door that had previously been shut to the little boy, it was flung wide open. Hand in hand the big man and the little boy walked down the center aisle. When they came to the front row, the gentleman instructed the boy to have a seat in the pew. The man then walked up to the platform, into the pulpit and began to preach. The man was Dr. D. L. Moody!<sup>3</sup>

The only way the boy got inside that church was because he was holding Dr. Moody's hand. In the same way, the only reason anyone—whether it's you or I or Billy Graham or Mother Teresa or a murderer on death row or an alcoholic in the gutter—the only reason anyone gets into heaven is because that person is holding the hand of Jesus. *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6.

Jesus extends his hand to you and to me and to everyone at the cross. He invites us to come home with Him into His Father's house. When the time comes for our life to end, the gates of heaven will be flung open. We will be welcomed into heaven because Jesus will carry us home and He has us in the strong grip of His grace.

What must we do to get to heaven? Just put our faith in God who saves us and freely gives us eternal life in heaven. Always remember the following. Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for you. You get to live there forever. It is going to be more wonderful than you can possibly imagine! You can have full confidence in this! Heaven is your eternal home! Jesus has promised this and He always keeps His Word!

### **Chapter 3: What will our bodies and minds be like?**

It is natural to wonder what our bodies will be like in heaven. As we get older, our bodies do not work as well as they used to. Our human bodies wear down. There are aches, pains, and suffering that we endure during life as a result of our bodies not working well. At any age, there are those who deal with diseases or have limitations on what their body can do.

We can look forward to the great promise of a new transformed body in heaven that functions perfectly! Philippians 3:20-21 states this promise. *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.* God is perfect and we can look forward to living in heaven forever with no more sin, pain, or suffering!

This chapter will answer questions related to what our bodies and minds will be like in heaven. In Mark 12:30 Jesus states the most important commandment. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with*

*all your mind and with all your strength.*" In heaven we will do this and it will be pure bliss! Our minds will be firmly fixed on God's love and this will impact everything we do.

### **What will our bodies look like in heaven?**

The Bible does not provide a specific answer to this question, but does let us know that our bodies will be glorious. Philippians 3:21 states that Jesus will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. If we consider the complexity of our earthly bodies, this Bible verse provides us with great anticipation for what is to come. Psalm 139:14 states, *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.* God took great care in creating the human body and He has something much more marvelous that awaits us with our heavenly bodies. What God has in store for us in heaven will far surpass any of our expectations.

It is not known what age our bodies will be in heaven. Theologian Thomas Aquinas thought that we will be the same age as Jesus when he died, about thirty-three. Some have thought that children who die young will grow and age to adults in heaven. Pastor and author Randy

Alcorn describes general qualities that he thinks our bodies will have. “Our bodies will demonstrate the qualities of youthfulness that Jesus so valued in children—curiosity, gratefulness, a longing to learn and explore, and eagerness to hear stories and gather close to loved ones.”<sup>1</sup> We do not know for sure what our bodies will be like or the age we will be but the important part is that we will be in heaven forever with God.

We can keep a heavenly focus for what is to come knowing that any difficulties we face with our earthly bodies will be gone in heaven. We can be a witness to others by how we deal with adversity in life and can also provide encouragement to others. The ending of the movie *Zootopia* provides a nice message for how we can seek to provide support for others. “Real life is messy. We all have limitations. We all make mistakes...We all have a lot in common. And the more we try to understand each other, the more exceptional each of us will be. But we have to try...I implore you try. Try to make the world a better place.”<sup>2</sup>

Joni Eareckson Tada is a good example of someone who has worked to be a witness of God’s great love through

dealing with adversity in her life. Tada had a diving accident at the age of 17 that resulted in her being a quadriplegic in a wheelchair. Since this time she has written books and spoken often about the importance of faith in God. Christian singer Nancy Honeytree wrote a poem called, "Joni's Waltz," that describes the mindset Joni has taken driven by her Christian faith. Like Joni Eareckson Tada, we know that in heaven our bodies will be perfect. We can draw on strength from God during our time on earth and trust that God can use any difficulty in our life for good.

#### Joni's Waltz

Though I spend my mortal lifetime in this chair,  
I refuse to waste it living in despair.  
And though others may receive  
Gifts of healing, I believe  
That He has given me a gift beyond compare...

For heaven is nearer to me,  
And at times it is all I can see.  
Sweet music I hear  
Coming down to my ear;  
And I know it's playing for me.

For I am Christ the Savior's own bride,  
And redeemed I shall stand by His side.  
He will say, "Shall we dance?"  
And our endless romance  
Will be worth all the tears I have cried.

I rejoice with him whose pain my Savior heals.  
And I weep with him who still his anguish feels.  
    But earthly joys and earthly tears,  
    Are confined to earthly years,  
And a greater good the Word of God reveals.

In this life we have a cross that we must bear;  
A tiny part of Jesus' death that we can share.  
    And one day we'll lay it down,  
    For He has promised us a crown,  
To which our suffering can never be compared.<sup>3</sup>

**Will we go to heaven immediately after death or simply  
fall asleep until judgement day?**

When we die we will go to heaven immediately. Our spirit will leave our earthly body and go to heaven.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 states this. *And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*

Ecclesiastes 12:7. When Lazarus the beggar died he went right to heaven (Luke 16:19-31). Also, Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross that today he would be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43).

The most recorded gospel song of all time provides a great description of this. Albert Edward Brumley wrote, "I'll Fly Away," in 1932. Brumley was born and raised in rural Spiro, Oklahoma. He attended the Hartford Musical

Institute in Arkansas. He then returned to Oklahoma to help his family plant and pick cotton.

Anyone who has performed any amount of farm work knows the intense physical and mental labor required. Brumley wrote the lyrics of I'll Fly Away based on his Christian faith. He also notes, "I was dreaming of flying away from that cotton field when I wrote 'I'll Fly Away.'"<sup>4</sup>

The lyrics of the song rely heavily on the image of departing life, which can be full of suffering and difficulty, and joining God in heaven. The words convey the opposite of a fear or sadness of death and instead brim with joy. Brumley wrote the song intending it be able to be sung by anyone. This is fitting as God desires that all people be saved and spend eternal life in heaven.

When we are faced with difficult work or adversity we can experience mental, physical, or emotional exhaustion. We can remember that heaven is real and God will provide us strength for each day. We can approach each day with joy because God is with us and when our work on earth is complete we will be with Him forever in heaven. The words of Moses in Psalm 90:14 are a good prayer for

each day. *Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

### I'll Fly Away

Some glad morning when this life is o'er,  
I'll fly away;  
To a home on God's celestial shore,  
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

### Chorus

I'll fly away, Oh Glory  
I'll fly away; (in the morning)  
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,  
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

When the shadows of this life have gone,  
I'll fly away;  
Like a bird from prison bars has flown,  
"I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

Just a few more weary days and then,  
I'll fly away;  
To a land where joy shall never end,  
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).<sup>s</sup>

### **Will we know everything in heaven?**

Only God is omniscient so in heaven there will still be things that we do not know. Psalm 147:5 describes that God is all-knowing. *Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.* Like humans, angels do not know everything (1 Peter 1:12). In heaven we will be perfect

without sin, but not knowing everything is not a flaw. God alone is omniscient.

When we die we will see things more clearly and know more than we do now. Paul notes this in 1 Corinthians 13:12. *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.* We will have eternity to learn more and more about God and His great love.

It is likely we will still have some memories of our earthly life when we are in heaven. In Isaiah 65:17 God states, *“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”* In this verse God is not saying we will have no memory of our life on earth. Pastor Randy Alcorn explains, *“He is saying that the former negative experiences of life will not overshadow our happiness while living in heaven.”*<sup>1</sup> Any sin and suffering from our earthly life will not be thought of because the joy of the Lord will be all-encompassing. Heaven will be amazing and we will be solely focused on God’s love.

## **What will we think about?**

Revelation 21:4 provides great insight into this question. *“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.”* Revelation 21:4.

You may be suffering physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, materially, relationally, or socially. God Himself will take your face in His hands and gently wipe away your tears as He reassures you there will be no more suffering in heaven.

Think about what that means. How much time do we spend thinking about things that are the result of sin? Sin causes suffering and pain in many ways. In heaven we will be freed from the negativity of sin.

In heaven there will be no more lies.

No more hospitals, death, or funerals.

No more walkers, canes, wheelchairs, ventilators, or any other devices to help our bodies.

No more broken homes, broken hearts, broken lives, or broken dreams.

No more physical handicaps.

No more heart disease, Parkinson's disease, autoimmune disease, arthritis, diabetes, cancer, or any other type of disease or sickness.

No more guns or violence or wars or fighting.

No more suffering at all! We can look forward with hope to heaven. One day we will live in the home of our dreams in the community of the great host of believers with our loving God. Our home in heaven is safe and secure.

When you feel unsettled about the direction of society, remember this is not our permanent home. In our time on earth God wants us to bring His Good News into a world that seems to be going bad. We can provide hope to many who have so little. We have the power of the almighty God within us. We have the promise of God before us. In heaven, we will have a new body, new heart, and a new mind! It will be perfect people living in perfect fellowship! It will be greater than we can imagine! When negative thoughts come your way, remember what awaits you in heaven. *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."* 1 Corinthians 2:9.

## Chapter 4: What will our relationship with God be like?

God has promised to be with us for all time. In our time on earth, God provides us strength and help with any difficulties. *The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.* Psalm 34:19. We also know that faith in God can invigorate us through an inner joy as we approach each day. *But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* Isaiah 40:31.

In heaven, God is still with us for all time and the joy of knowing Him will provide us with great strength and vigor. Our relationship with God will be different though because in heaven there is no sin. We will see God's face, live with Him, and worship and serve Him with great passion! Revelation 22:3-5a describes this. *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.*

It is an amazing thing that we will see the face of God. In ancient Israel only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies of the temple; and the high priest could only go in once a year. When he went in, a rope was tied around his ankle in case he died inside. The Holy of Holies was so sacred that no one else would dare go in.

In Exodus 33:18-23, Moses says to God, *Now show me your glory.* God replies that He will cause all His goodness to pass in front of Moses. God goes on, *“you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”* Exodus 33:20. The wonder of heaven is that we will be freely welcomed into the very presence of God and see Him face-to-face!

Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins so that through God’s grace and forgiveness we can be seen as holy. When Jesus died on the cross, the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). Sin renders people unfit to be in the presence of God and see Him face-to-face. Jesus Christ, through His death, removed the barriers between God and us. In our time on earth we can approach God in prayer and worship to receive mercy and grace to help us with any problems. We can also look forward to a

perfect relationship with God in heaven. To be able to look into God's eyes will be what we have always longed for. We will find that seeing God will be our greatest joy! All joy will flow from our relationship with God. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus states, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*" In heaven our actions, words, thoughts, and feelings will be pure and solely focused on God's love for us. God's grace makes us pure and heaven is His free gift to us.

Poet and song writer Fanny Crosby wrote the following lyrics in 1891. The sure hope of a home in heaven is evident in the lyrics as well the joy of living with God forever.

Some day the silver cord will break,  
And I no more as now shall sing;  
But oh, the joy when I shall wake  
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story—Saved by grace;  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story—Saved by grace;

Some day my earthly house will fall.  
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be;  
But this I know—my All in All  
Has now a place in Heav'n for me.<sup>1</sup>

Fanny Crosby was born in 1820 and had a long life to the age of 94. Crosby was blind from the age of six weeks, but it did not hinder her determination for praising and serving God. She wrote the lyrics to more than 8,000 gospel hymns. She also was a friend of several presidents of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

One of Fanny Crosby's most famous hymns is, "Blessed Assurance." The composer of the music for this hymn played the melody to Crosby and asked, "What does the melody say to you?" Crosby replied that the tune said, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!" and then she proceeded to state what the first stanza of the hymn would be.<sup>3</sup>

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine  
O what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Savior am happy and blessed  
Watching and waiting, looking above  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long  
This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long

Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus

Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus

Death could not hold You, You are victorious  
Praise to the risen King  
Death could not hold You, You are victorious  
Praise to the risen King

Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior  
Wonderful Savior

Motivated by God's love and the blessed assurance of heaven, Fanny Crosby sought to praise God her whole life. She did not view her blindness as a limitation. When she was only nine years old, she wrote a poem about how she viewed her blindness.

O what a happy soul am I,  
Although I cannot see,  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy  
That other people don't.  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,  
I cannot, and I won't.

Crosby's sought to live out the words of Psalm 145:2.  
*Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.*  
Though she could not see in her time on earth, she knew that in heaven she would see the very face of God. Being able to

live her life with God as her constant companion, source of strength, and guide was a foretaste of the glory of God that Fanny saw in heaven when she died.

In our lives we can seek to live like Fanny by keeping our hearts fixed on God's love. We are blessed to have a wonderful God that cares for us and loves us. Through faith in God we can get a small idea of what our relationship with God will be like in heaven.

There was a man who was widely respected by all who lived to the incredible age of 120. His long life could be credited in part to the cheerful outlook that characterized his life. One afternoon during his retirement, he was at work in the garden near the church he attended. He sang songs of praise to God while working. His pastor arrived at church and noted, "My, you seem very happy today."

"Yes, I was just thinking."

"Thinking about what?" inquired his pastor.

"Oh, I was just thinking that if the crumbs of joy that fall from the Master's table in this world are so good, what will the great feast in glory be like! I tell you, pastor, there will be enough for everyone and some to spare up there."

The joy and satisfaction that we experience in our earthly lives from our faith in God, will pale in comparison to the joy we experience in heaven. The second part of Revelation 22:5 states, *And they will reign for ever and ever.* In heaven, we will reign with Christ. Reigning with Christ means that Christ reigns in us. We live as He intended, to worship and glorify Him in all that we do. No sin, just perfect bliss and fellowship with our Creator. Motivated by God's love, this can be what we strive for in our time on earth.

God can guide us our whole lives and into eternity in heaven. "Guide me, O my great Redeemer," is a powerful hymn that drives this point home. The music was written by John Hughes, a Welsh coal miner, near the end of his life. He had no musical training but was inspired by his faith in God to write the music.

God provided manna or bread from heaven for the Israelites as they made their way to the promised land. God provides for us and guides us as well our whole life. We can have confidence that our great Redeemer will lead us to heaven with Him forever. Our relationship with God will be

perfect in heaven. In seeking to praise and glorify God in all that we do, we can live in joy and hope for what God has in store for us in heaven. Keep your sight firmly fixed on God and you will be amazed at what you will see!

Guide me, O my great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but you are mighty;  
hold me with your powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore,  
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
where the healing waters flow.  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
ever be my strength and shield,  
ever be my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside.  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises, songs of praises  
I will ever sing to you,  
I will ever sing to you.

## **Chapter 5: What will our relationship with others be like?**

God created us to need and want community and fellowship with other believers. Our relationships with others should be based on God's love for us. The more we know about God's love, the better we are able to love, encourage, and support others. Jesus describes this in Matthew 22:37-39. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Pastor Randy Alcorn provides interpretation of these verses. "Jesus affirmed that the greatest commandment was to love God, but that the second, inseparable from the first, was to love our neighbor. He never considered these commands incompatible. He saw the second flowing directly from the first. One of the highest ways we love God is by loving people."<sup>1</sup>

This is how God wants His people to live together. In heaven, we will still spend time with believers. We will better be able to show God's love to others because God

graciously will remove all sin from our lives. God is love. If He reigns in our life then we too radiate His love.

Missionary Amy Carmichael describes how this will be the case in heaven as we will still fellowship with believers. "Shall we know one another in Heaven?...We are told that we shall be like our Lord Jesus...and does He not know and love and remember? He would not be Himself if He did not, and we should not be ourselves if we did not." In thinking about what our relationship with others will be like we can keep in mind the fruit of the Spirit and being around the table of our King.

### **Fruit of the Spirit**

In heaven there will be no sin. To imagine what this will mean as we fellowship with other believers we can think about the fruit of the Spirit. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* Galatians 5:22-23. There will be no more disagreements or hurt feelings or anger or sadness.

We have all likely shown the fruit of the Spirit to others or have been on the receiving end of them. Being shown love without any conditions. Joy based on obeying

God's will and fellowship with other believers. Peaceful thoughts from harmony, unity, contentment, and a lack of fear. Forbearance to show patience when it is required. Kindness to put others at ease and to be a friend. Goodness to be generous to others and selfless. Faithfulness to demonstrate trust and conviction for what is right by being devoted to God, family, and friends. Gentleness to be humble with a compassionate approach toward others' weaknesses. Self-control to restrain one's emotions, actions, and desires and to be in harmony with the will of God. Thinking about those experiences and knowing that in heaven this is what will occur all the time is quite wonderful!

In our time on earth we can strive to live out the fruit of the Spirit. *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* Colossians 3:12. On earth, we know that there is still sin, sadness, and pain. Showing God's love to others can make a big difference.

There once was a contest to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child whose next-door

neighbor was an elderly man whose wife had recently passed away. Upon seeing the man crying, the little boy went into the old man's yard, climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."<sup>2</sup>

At times we experience suffering, pain, and sadness. God is always with us and seeks to help us. God can use each of us to share His love and compassion. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* 1 Corinthians 1: 3-4. We can look forward to the eternity we will spend in heaven where we will only experience love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

### **Around the table of our King**

In the movie, *Avengers: Endgame*, one of the super heroes, Iron Man, sacrifices himself in order to defeat evil and save those on the side of good. Later on in the movie there is a funeral scene for Iron Man. A video message is

played that Iron Man had recorded of himself the day before he died. Part of his message describes his hope that good will win. "I'm hoping that if you play this back, it is in celebration. I hope families are reunited. I hope we get it back and something like a normal version of the planet has been restored." A wreath is then placed in a lake. The camera pans around the scene to show all the superheroes from the previous twenty-two movies that led up to this movie who have gathered to pay their respects.<sup>3</sup>

When I watched the end of this movie it made me a little teary-eyed because I thought about Jesus' sacrifice for all humans. On the cross Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil for all time. He died on the cross and gloriously rose three days later so that we can be victors in Christ! Through this, we live forever with Jesus in heaven thanks to the free gift of eternal life.

The last thing that Iron Man says in his recorded message is that there is no need to worry. "Everything is going to work out exactly the way it is supposed to." In our lives we can trust that everything will work out exactly as it

is supposed to. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will spend eternity in heaven.

Seeing all the superheroes gathered together made me think about how this will occur in heaven. In heaven all the host of Christian believers will gather. It will not be a somber scene like the movie though. We will gather together to praise and worship God in joy!

There is a great hymn called, “Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn),” which describes the forgiveness of sins received through Holy Communion as we gather at the table of our King. It also notes how we are strengthened to life everlasting in heaven where we will join around the table of our King with all believers.

Under the YouTube video of this hymn a man posted a comment about what he thinks about when listening to the hymn. “When they come to ‘around the table of the king’, I think of my family in heaven, my Grandparents, Great Aunties and Uncles, my miscarried sibling and miscarried cousins and my cousin who died unexpectedly on the day before his 30th birthday. I imagine them turning their heads and smiling at us, as a way of inviting us to come and sit

with them. This song makes me think of that day when we will all sit together in perfect peace and love, enjoying each other's company at that happy reunion."<sup>4</sup>

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away,  
Slain for us: and we remember:  
The promise made that all who come in faith  
Find forgiveness at the cross.  
So we share in this Bread of life,  
And we drink of His sacrifice,  
As a sign of our bonds of peace  
Around the table of the King.

The body of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
Torn for you: eat and remember  
The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life,  
Paid the price to make us one.  
So we share in this Bread of Life,  
And we drink of His sacrifice  
As a sign of our bonds of love  
Around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin,  
Shed for you: drink and remember  
He drained death's cup that all may enter in  
To receive the life of God.  
So we share in this Bread of Life,  
And we drink of His sacrifice,  
As a sign of our bonds of grace  
Around the table of the King.

And so with thankfulness and faith  
We rise to respond: and to remember  
Our call to follow in the steps of Christ  
As His body here on earth.  
As we share in His suffering,  
We proclaim: Christ will come again!  
And we'll join in the feast of heaven  
Around the table of the King.<sup>5</sup>

In heaven, Christians will be gathered from different cultures and backgrounds to celebrate our great King. All Christians will praise and worship God. *They cried out in a loud voice.* Revelation 7:10. The singular use of voice seems to imply a shared language. In Genesis 11 the people sought to build a great tower at Babel. God made them have different languages because they were seeking self-glorification and not looking to glorify Him. In heaven, we will solely glorify God. There may be a universal language that God has everyone know. God could also allow everyone to understand all languages. Heaven will be perfect, so we can expect that we will be able to communicate with all who are there.

The overarching impact on our relationship with others in heaven will be our perfect, everlasting union with God our Father and our Savior Jesus Christ. We can seek to have God's love impact our life on earth and those we interact with. The blessed assurance of heaven awaits us and the joy of fellowship with fellow believers. There is a touching poem called, "Knowing you'll be there," that describes that Christians will meet again in heaven.

Knowing you'll be there

The other day  
I passed the place you always liked to go  
And I picked up the phone because  
I thought you'd want to know  
But I forgot you weren't there  
I miss you on those days  
That I'm reminded of your smile  
And the funny things you'd say

Knowing we can spend a lifetime  
Reminiscing on the past  
Knowing I will see your face again  
Where tender moments last  
It makes me want to go there  
Knowing I won't be alone  
Knowing you'll be there  
Makes it easy to go home.\*

For Christians it is never goodbye when our time on earth is done, but see you later. In heaven, we will be reunited! We will love God with all our heart, soul, and mind! We will also show this love to others in everlasting perfection through love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control!

## **Chapter 6: What will daily life be like?**

Everything good, enjoyable, refreshing, fascinating, and interesting is derived from God. We can look forward to a blessed and amazing life in heaven. God promises that we will laugh, rejoice, and experience endless joy in heaven. *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.* Psalm 16:11.

There is a joke that describes what life in heaven might be like. A 90 year old couple, Jane and Tim, having been married for 65 years, passed away at almost the same time. They had been in good health most of their life mainly due to the wife's interest in health food and exercise.

When they reached the pearly gates, Peter the disciple, took them to their house that had a beautiful kitchen and sparkling pool. As they "oohed and aahed" Tim asked Peter how much all this was going to cost.

"It's free," Peter replied, "this is heaven."

Next they went to their backyard to look at the amazing golf course that the home backed up to. It was majestic with perfectly groomed fairways. Tim asked, "How much is it to play?"

Peter replied, "This is heaven, you play for free."

They then went to the club house and saw a lavish buffet lunch with a large variety of cuisines. "How much to eat?" asked Tim.

"Don't you understand yet? This is heaven. It is free!" Peter replied with some exasperation.

"Well, where are the low fat and cholesterol tables?" Tim asked timidly.

Peter responded, "That's the best part. You can eat whatever you like and you never get fat and you never get sick. This is heaven."

With that Tim turned to Jane and said, "This is your fault. If it weren't for those bran muffins, we could have been here years ago!"

This joke is obviously not true. We know that God wants us to take care of our body and mind on earth so that we can serve Him faithfully and better be able to show His love to others.

In heaven we *can* count on an enjoyable and perfect life as we worship and praise God in all that we do. Any stresses of life will be no more. We will simply be joyful

living in God's presence. Let's consider a few aspects of daily life in heaven: service, animals, and our home.

## **Service**

It is likely that in heaven we will have roles and responsibilities. In Genesis 2:15 we read that God had things for Adam and Eve to do in the Garden of Eden. *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.* Genesis 2:15. In heaven any work or service will be done purely in gladness and will be fulfilling. It will be a joy to faithfully serve the Lord in any way since we will get to live with Him forever without any sin. *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.* Revelation 22:3.

In our time on earth we can also do any work or service to give glory to God. *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.* Colossians 3:23. God has shown us such great love, that we can shine His light and love to others through our service.

In 2003, on a radio broadcast of The Lutheran Hour, an illustration was told about the importance of doing our work with all our heart for God's glory. The Lutheran Hour

is a Christian outreach ministry that provides a daily radio program and other resources. In 1780 the legislature of the state of Connecticut was in session when the sky darkened ominously. Some legislators feared that Judgement Day had arrived. The darkness was so intense that it started to cause a panic. A motion was made for immediate adjournment. That's when a legislator named colonel Davenport, rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to have the Lord find me doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought."

In our time on earth we can faithfully serve the Lord with the tasks and roles He leads us to do. In heaven we can look forward to serving God as well in His very midst. In heaven there will no doubt about our duty and our desire. Whatever we do, we will work at it with all our heart, as we work for the Lord.

## **Animals**

For many people animals are an important part of their life on earth. It is often wondered if animals will be in heaven. Animals are an important part of God's creation and

God entrusted us to take care of them. It is likely that animals will be in heaven. Isaiah 11:6-8 describes that, *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. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.* The picture painted is one of harmony and peace with all of God's creation.

In addition, Revelation 5:13 states that animals will praise God. *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* Revelation 5:13.

We do not know for sure, but animals may talk in heaven as well. Christian writer and theologian, C.S. Lewis, included talking animals in his book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This book series has many Christian themes and messages woven throughout the books. C.S. Lewis likely drew on Revelation 5:13 as inspiration to include talking

animals; as well as Numbers 22:28-30, when a donkey speaks to Balaam.

We know that whales, dolphins, birds and various primates make sounds that communicate specific and sometimes detailed messages to their own kind. Might they originally have had even greater communicative abilities? It is described that animals on earth praise God. *Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, ...wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds.* Psalm 148:7,10. The intricate design of animals are evidence of God's great power.

God's creation gives praise to Him in other ways as well. It has been found that the electron shell of the carbon atom produces the same harmonic scale as the Gregorian chant. Whale songs can travel thousands of miles underwater. Meadowlarks have a range of three hundred notes. Research in the field of bioacoustics has revealed that we are surrounded by millions of ultrasonic songs. Even earthworms make faint staccato songs. Animals will likely be in heaven. Humans and all of God's creation will praise Him!

## Our home

The Taj Mahal was built between 1632 and 1653 as a monument of love. It took over twenty thousand skilled workers to complete. It is made of white marble and has semiprecious stones inlaid in the walls and ceilings. The Taj Mahal was intentionally designed not as a palace but as a tomb. It was built by a wealthy shah for his beloved wife, to whom he'd been married for only fourteen years before she died. If an Indian ruler could prepare something so beautiful as the Taj Mahal as a *tomb* for his wife, think about what God must be preparing as a *home* where He will *live* forever with His people whom He loves.<sup>2</sup>

The home of your dreams is your Father's home in heaven. We do not know exactly what it will be like, because it will be more perfect than we can imagine. "*What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived*" — *the things God has prepared for those who love him.* 1 Corinthians 2:9. There is an old Dennis the Menace cartoon in which Dennis is looking up at a starry night sky. The caption on the bottom of the cartoon reads: "If heaven is that pretty on the bottom, think how it must look on **TOP!**" Just

think that God is preparing a special place in heaven just for you.

All heaven will be wonderful. The city and streets within heaven will be spectacular. *The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass...The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.* Revelation 21:18, 21. There will be miles and miles of gold stretching out in all directions in heaven. The streets being made of gold can be seen as an important message. Earthly wealth has no significance in heaven. There is a joke about a rich man who did not understand this point.

There once was a rich man who was near death. He was very grieved because he had worked so hard for his money and he wanted to be able to take it with him to heaven. So he began to pray that he might be able to take some of his wealth with him.

An angel hears his plea and appears to him. "Sorry, but you can't take your wealth with you." The man implores the angel to speak to God to see if He might bend the rules.

The man continues to pray that his wealth could follow him. The angel reappears and informs the man that God has decided to allow him to take one suitcase with him. Overjoyed, the man gathers his largest suitcase and fills it with pure gold bars and places it beside his bed.

Soon afterward the man dies and shows up at the gates of heaven to greet Peter. Peter seeing the suitcase says, "Hold on, you can't bring that in here!"

But, the man explains to Peter that he has permission and asks him to verify his story with God. Sure enough, Peter checks and comes back saying, "You're right. You are allowed one carry-on bag, but I'm supposed to check its contents before letting it through."

Peter opens the suitcase to inspect the worldly items that the man found too precious to leave behind and exclaims, "You brought pavement?"

In heaven, gold is just pavement. It is worth reflecting on how much time, effort, and attention we give to acquiring and increasing our money; something that is totally insignificant in heaven. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where*

*thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break and in steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21.*

We should strive to use our time, talents, and treasures to glorify God. There is nothing wrong with Christians having money. Our focus needs to be on how we can use it to glorify God. You can't take earthly possessions with you when you die. Just think you never see a u-haul behind a hearse.

In heaven, we will have no need for earthly possessions or money. God will be all that we need. All good things are from God. He created us and knows what we need. We can look forward to a blessed and amazing life in heaven!

## **Chapter 7: The World's Greatest Future**

God has the world's greatest future in store for Christians. God's greatness and power is beyond our understanding. Because of this we can look forward with great anticipation to our promised eternal home in heaven. Heaven surely is a wonderful place where God has a home prepared for those who believe in Him as their Lord. Theologian Lewis Smedes described that, "Grace is the gift of feeling sure that our future, even our dying, is going to turn out more splendidly than we dare imagine."

Our amazing future in heaven can affect how we approach life on earth. C.S. Lewis notes the impact this can have. "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."<sup>1</sup> When we keep our eternal home in mind it affects our thoughts, words, and actions. Problems or difficulties in this life can seem more manageable. We are more likely to keep God's love at the forefront of our lives. This chapter explores this further and then ends with more

thoughts about our amazing future. This amazing future demonstrates further God's unlimited love toward us. God's love and our eternal home in heaven is too great not to share with others.

### **A heavenly perspective on earth**

Christians know that earth is our temporary home and we are citizens of heaven. *But our citizenship is in heaven.* Philippians 3:20. God's loves us and cares for us in the past, today, the future, and into eternity. In response to His love we can focus on sharing God's love with others. We can keep from getting influenced by society which extols self-promotion, money, power, and possessions. Colossians 3:2 states what we should focus on. *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* If we do this we live a blessed life in the comfort and support of God's arms. C.S. Lewis summed it up this way. "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither."

God's grace and love can change our whole perspective. We can be content in any situation because we know that God is with us. Madame Jeanne Guyon, a seventeenth-century Christian noblewoman, wrote the

following words from a French dungeon. “[The heaven-minded Christian] walks by a simple and pure faith,...and when this sojourner looks out of his own eyes, he sees things as though he were looking through the eyes of God. He sees his own life, he sees his surrounding circumstances, he sees other believers, he sees friends and enemies, he sees principalities and powers, he sees the whole course of the pageantry of history through the eyes of God...and is content.”<sup>2</sup>

We know that because Jesus lives, He defeated death for all time and paid the price for our sins. We have a wonderful future in store for us. This changes our outlook on each day and we know that God will help us handle whatever comes in life. He will also fill us with a great sense of inner joy. A great song that highlights these important ideas is, “Because He Lives,” by Bill and Gloria Gaither.

God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus,  
He came to love, heal, and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Because He lives I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

And then one day I'll cross the river,  
I'll fight life's final war with pain;  
And then as death gives way to victory,  
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives.<sup>3</sup>

A few of the comments on a YouTube video of a great rendition of this song demonstrate the impact of knowing that Jesus lives!

"My grandfather passed away today, he had the biggest impact on my life and showed me the correct way to live life as a Christian man. We played this song for him every day leading up to his passing. It was one of his favorite Gospel songs. I find peace in knowing he is with our lord Jesus and is dancing with his family."

"I sang with you all the way through. I am 84, and still singing and praising our wonderful Savior."

God's love in our lives brings great peace. When we know we can lean on Him for strength and encouragement, each day becomes more manageable. The hymn, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," was written as a result of an epiphany based on the text of Deuteronomy 33:27. *The*

*eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.* Anthony Showalter was a gospel music composer and teacher. He wrote the hymn with pastor Elisha Hoffman. Showalter received letters from two of his former students saying that their wives had died. When writing letters of consolation to these students, Showalter was inspired by Deuteronomy 33:27 and wrote the lyrics to the hymn with help from Hoffman. The hymn describes how we can rely on strength from God and have inner joy and peace throughout life.

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
what a blessedness, what a peace is mine,  
leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain:  
Leaning, leaning,  
Safe and secure from all alarms;  
leaning, leaning,  
leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,  
leaning on the everlasting arms;  
O how bright the path grows from day to day,  
leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,  
leaning on the everlasting arms?  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
leaning on the everlasting arms.<sup>5</sup>

Christians know that death is not final. We will see all Christians again in heaven. In our time on earth we can leave a legacy that lives on in the lives of others about the importance of faith in God. Because of God's love and power we can all make a difference in the lives of others. God can use us to show His love to others.

Dr. Phineas Gurley was pastor of the church which Abraham Lincoln attended while President. He preached the funeral sermon for the president in the White House East Room. Gurley described how many people admired Lincoln for his integrity, kindness, patience, forgiving nature, and self-sacrificing leadership. Lincoln had concern for the poor, weak, suffering, and oppressed based on his faith in God that let him know that all humans are important to God. President Lincoln's faith in God as his Lord and Savior is what Pastor Gurley wanted people to remember about the president and for all others to have this great faith in God. The following is part of the message that Pastor Gurley shared at Lincoln's funeral.

"But more sublime than any or all of these, more holy and influential, more beautiful, and strong, and

sustaining, *was his abiding confidence in God and in the final triumph of truth and righteousness through Him and for His sake.* This was his noblest virtue, his grandest principle, the secret alike of his strength, his patience, and his success... By this he speaks to his successor in office, and charges him to 'have faith in God.' By this he speaks to the members of his cabinet, the men with whom he counselled so often and was associated so long, and he charges them to 'have faith in God.' By this he speaks to the officers and men of our noble army and navy, and, as they stand at their posts of duty and peril, he charges them to 'have faith in God.' By this he speaks to all who occupy positions of influence and authority in these sad and troublous times, and he charges them all to 'have faith in God.' By this he speaks to this great people as they sit in sackcloth to-day, and weep for him with a bitter wailing, and refuse to be comforted, and he charges them to 'have faith in God.' And by this he *will* speak through the ages and to all rulers and peoples in every land, and his message to them will be, 'Cling to Liberty and right; battle for them; bleed for them; die for them, if need be; and have confidence in God.'"

Have faith in God. President Lincoln and Dr. Gurley both knew this is more important than anything else. If this message would be taken to heart by all in the world, think about what a difference it would make. There would be far more encouragement and support and far less anger and sadness. Faith in God can lead to a heavenly perspective where we know that death is not the end, but the beginning of something so beautiful that we cannot begin to imagine it. Christians know where our true home is.

A prominent citizen in a town was dying. As he lay in his lovely home, the best doctors surrounding him, he whispered, with a note of despair, "I'm leaving home, I'm leaving home."

Across town there lay a solitary figure in surroundings bare. Her modest home contained only the most threadbare of life's essentials. In her eye was a gleam of hope and joy. Before she died she was heard to say with content, "I'm going home, I'm going home."

Let your eternal heavenly home impact your earthly perspective. Keep your thoughts on heaven and God's love

and in this earthly life God can use you so that more people are given the free gift of heaven.

### **The greatest future**

God has prepared amazing things for those that love Him that we cannot begin to imagine. Mark Lowry, a former singer with the Gaither vocal band, described it this way.

“This means if you take Disney’s imagination, and you mix it up with Beethoven’s brilliance, and you wrap around Einstein’s wildest dreams, then the best that those old boys could come up with would be a kindergarten play compared to what God has prepared for those who love Him.”<sup>7</sup>

The greatest future awaits us in heaven. There will be endless days of rejoicing! The beauty of heaven and dwelling in God’s presence will be simply amazing! A song written by Mrs. A.S. Bridgewater in 1920 captures the anticipation of the beauty of heaven.

How Beautiful Heaven Must Be!

We read of a place that’s called Heaven,  
It’s made for the pure and the free;  
These truths in God’s Word He hath given,  
How beautiful Heaven must be.

How beautiful Heaven must be,  
Sweet home of the happy and free;

Fair haven of rest for the weary,  
How beautiful Heaven must be.

In Heaven no drooping nor pining,  
No wishing for elsewhere to be;  
God's light is forever there shining,  
How beautiful Heaven must be.<sup>7</sup>

Don Piper, author of the book *90 minute in heaven*, details in the book the view of heaven he experienced and how it impacted his life. Don Piper was in a car accident and declared dead at the scene. After ninety minutes of a glimpse into heaven he came back to his body on earth and survived the car accident. Piper describes the view of God's light in heaven he experienced. "Heaven's light and texture defy earthly eyes or explanation. Warm, radiant light engulfed me. As I looked around, I could hardly grasp the vivid, dazzling colors. Every hue and tone surpassed anything I had ever seen."<sup>8</sup>

It is hard to explain how wonderful heaven will be. Based on our earthly experiences there is nothing that will compare. Song writer Albert Brumley captures this wonderfully in his poem, "I couldn't begin to tell you."

If I had all the words of our language  
to use at a moment's command  
If I had all the beautiful pictures  
of nature, the sea, and the land

If I spoke in a voice never ending,  
speaking only of loveliness  
I couldn't begin to tell you  
how beautiful Heaven is.

If I mixed all the glorious sunsets  
with the fathomless mysteries of Mars  
If I mixed all the beauty of spring time  
with the gleam of the moon and the stars

If I added the love of all mothers  
and the thrill of a baby's kiss  
I couldn't, no I couldn't,  
begin to tell you how beautiful Heaven is.<sup>9</sup>

If you have ever been excited for an event, a trip, or spending time with a person or people, you imagine what it will be like. We can have great excitement and anticipation for what is waiting for us in heaven. Imagining what heaven might be like can grow our relationship with God as we seek to better know His love and His Word in the Bible. Pastor Randy Alcorn provides a description of what heaven might be like based on his study of Bible verses about heaven.

“People smiling and joyful, not angry, depressed, and empty. If you're not in a particularly beautiful place, close your eyes and envision the most beautiful place you've

ever been—complete with palm trees, raging rivers, jagged mountains, waterfalls, or snowdrifts.

Think of friends or family members who loved Jesus and are with him now. Picture them with you, walking together in this place. All of you have powerful bodies, stronger than those of Olympic decathletes. You are laughing, playing, talking, and reminiscing. You reach up to a tree to pick an apple or orange. You take a bite. It's so sweet that it's startling. You've never tasted anything so good. Now you see someone coming toward you. It's Jesus, with a big smile on his face. You fall to your knees in worship. He pulls you up and embraces you.

At last, you're with the person you were made for, in the place you were made to be. Everywhere you go, there will be new people and places to enjoy, new things to discover. What's that you smell? A feast. A party's ahead, and you're invited. There's exploration and work to be done—you can't wait to get started."<sup>10</sup>

The greatest story of your life will just be beginning when your time on earth is complete. In response to God's great love we can strive to follow God's will and to show

His wonderful love to others. The world's greatest future is promised to all who believe in God as their Savior!

The ending of the last book in the Chronicles of Narnia series, *The Last Battle*, provides a great outlook on what awaits us in heaven. Following this are the words of 1 Peter 1:3-9, which are excellent to read and meditate on often to keep a heavenly perspective in our thoughts and words.

“And for us this is the end of all the stories and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all the adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last they were beginning Chapter 1 of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.”<sup>11</sup>

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is*

*ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:3-9.*

We can keep heaven in mind as we go about our day to faithfully serve God and to give glory to Him so that more people can share in the wonderful inheritance in heaven. This is an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Let God's great love and your great future guide your life! Heaven is real! God's promises are true! The greatest future awaits!



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