

## Heaven in the Real World - Part 3

*“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1 NKJV)*

*Our hearts remember Eden. Our spirits long for Heaven.*

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To a large portion of the world, being connected to a digital device or screen is their life, and we who are of an older generation, called to steward this planet, life, and culture here, need to be aware of what's going on in the next generation. We would be naive to think that the pace of that is going to slow down - that the pace of life is somehow going to reverse itself, and we'll go back to calmer and more “wonderful” days. To bemoan what's happening right now in our world is not helpful, and does no good whatsoever.

The question is, what can we do and how can we live in the midst of all this chatter, noise, and distraction? That is part of the focus that this series will cover. *This* is not real life - this is not all there is. This is just a *shadow*. We're living in between. Our hearts remember Eden, which is a type and shadow of Heaven, but our spirits long for the real Heaven.

As it's described in Scripture, the Garden of Eden was mind-blowing in how amazing it was. They were working and laboring - Adam and Eve had jobs to do. They had assignments from God. They fellowshiped with him unhindered - without clutter - and in that environment they had divine work to do, and they lived in amazing harmony - and then sin entered into the picture, and the fall came.

But now, as our spirits long for Heaven, we have something to look forward to - what motivated and drove first-century Christians - Jewish, and then Gentile - to live above the tyranny and the hammer of Rome (not unlike today's government control) which fell hard on the Jewish people. The economy was decimated. There were wars and rumors of war - life was difficult and hard. There was much suffering and pain. There was little to no hope - it was hopeless.

In that environment, the Gospel spread, and the kingdom of God advanced exponentially in a very short amount of time, historically. Both biblical writers and historians have said, *“And they turned the world upside down.”* - and they did it in the worst possible scenario, the worse that times became.

What's going on in our world right now - depression and the suicide rate are out of control, and the mental health world is overwhelmed by the problems that are happening. We need help - and we need hope. What drove the first-century believers was primarily one thing - they knew who they were in Christ, and they knew where they were going. They understood their destiny - stepping into another level of life - far beyond what we experience here. They lived with Heaven in view, and that informed their lives in the moment. Knowing what was coming minimized their pain, suffering, and difficulty of the world in which they were living in that moment, because at the end of the day, they knew they had already won - that there was coming a reward far above this world.

Two things that the Church doesn't talk about anymore are Heaven and hell, but the point of the resurrection of Jesus was that it points to a new life in Heaven. If we know the game is already won, we can step up to the plate and swing for the fence. When we know we win now in life, then it makes this present life joyful, even when there is difficulty. When Heaven is in view, it gives us the grace to step over.

Scripture tells us about Jesus, *"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising [means to step over] the shame"* (Hebrews 12:2 ESV) - everything he was going through on this earth - betrayal, slander, and accusations - because he knew what was coming. The greatest thing that grips us today is the fear of death. Even Jesus said, *"Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."* (Matthew 26:39 NKJV) - and he submitted to the Father's will, in that he made a way for you and me to win - to go to Heaven.

But, in spite of what's happened in our world because of all the distractions - ways to avert the inevitable - as we read and study about Heaven, it becomes more real to us - more serious and alive - more amazing - and it informs our mentality in a good way, where it is a win for us whether we die - because we'll be with Jesus - and it's a win if we stay, because we can then take a lot more people to Heaven with us. That's why it's called the "Good News" of Jesus Christ, because that's what the Gospel is - that he is making and preparing a place for us - and it will not be a *cartoon* version of Heaven.

*"Your heart is made for the Kingdom of God. This might be the most important thing anyone will ever tell you about yourself. Your heart only thrives in one habitat, and that safe place is called the Kingdom of God."* (John Eldridge, from his book *All Things New*).

The idea of the kingdom of God encompasses Heaven and earth today. The more clear our view, theology, ideas, and sight about Heaven is, the more it informs, energizes, motivates, and inspires our lives here today. That's how the first-century Christians could actually go to a stake, cross, or a den of lions, and have joy in the moment, because they knew what was next. We have lost sight of what's next, and we live in the tremendous fear of what's in between, which is the process of dieing - the physical side of it - but, the more informed we are of the reality of Heaven, the more tolerable and the more minimized the fear of the dieing process will be.

*"Because Satan hates us [he hates you and has a strategy against you], he's determined to rob us of the joy we'd have if we believed what God tells us about the magnificent world to come"*  
(Randy Alcorn, from his book *Heaven*).

In his book, Imagine Heaven: Near-Death Experiences, God's Promises, and the Exhilarating Future That Awaits You, John Burke said that twenty three per cent of the people that he interviewed who had near-death experiences had encountered a situation involving hell, which then motivated them to help as many people as they could to avoid having to go there.

## **What Will Heaven Be Like?**

Revelation 21:10-14 ESV

*"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed - on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

John used metaphorical language because what he saw when he got a glimpse of Heaven so overwhelmed him, he had no other way to describe it - there was no category for it. What we are headed to is so glorious, that he couldn't put words to it.

## **What Will We Do in Heaven?**

Revelation 5:13 ESV

*"And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'"*

We'll worship around the throne. We'll fellowship with Jesus and other believers. We're going to see those in Christ who have gone before us.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 ESV

*"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words."*

We have to believe that all of this is already happening. We will continue to serve God there. We will have work to do.

Revelation 22:3-4 NKJV

*"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads."*

## **Living With Heaven in View - Preparing for Heaven**

Colossians 3:1-4 NKJV

*"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

- 1] If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
- 2] Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- 4] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV

*“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

### **Living With Heaven in View - A Heavenly Mindset**

Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV

*“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

When you know who you are and where you are going, you will know what to do and how to live!

This is what living with Heaven in view does - it informs our lives today. If we're putting it off and ignoring the inevitable - giving it no thought because it doesn't matter *now* - we will lose the joy - the energy - the *Life* (zōē' - the God kind and God quality of life) where we can rise above the things that are holding us down right now things that are tethering us to the ground.

John 1:12 NKJV

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*

*Believe - Receive - Become...* This is something that will motivate and energize our lives because we see what's coming. When that comes into focus, Jesus becomes Lord of our lives, and we see things differently, and we get to spend the rest of our lives growing into that.

## **Prayer**

*Father, we believe that our lives have shifted and our trajectories have been changed as we have been informed about the Good News of Heaven. And Lord, we give You our hearts. We believe, we receive, and we become more like You as we anticipate Heaven. Father, thank You for the Good News of Jesus Christ - the Gospel - and thank You Lord, that You give us a target - You give us Heaven. You present it to us through Your Word - in words that are hard to even comprehend.*

*Lord, may we begin to live with Heaven in view. Inform our lives now, and Lord, would You inform our lives to the point where we want to bring others with us, by telling our stories - getting our buckets filled up with Who You are, and then going out and making beautiful messes everywhere we go, and leaking out the Life - the Love - the Joy - the Hope - that is found in Jesus Christ. Lord, thank You that You are sending us out into our relative spheres of influence, and Lord, we ask that You would empower and motivate your witness with Heaven in view. We give you praise and thanks, in Jesus' name. Amen*