

## Heaven in the Real World - Part 4

*"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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*Holy Spirit, be our Teacher today. You are the Spirit of Truth, and You lead us and guide us into all Truth. Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts that we may see, hear, and know the Truth that makes us free.*

Intro:

*"Death - a reality that we all have to face. 150,000 people die every single day. Where do they go? Are their souls somewhere else - or are they just gone? Is there life after death?"*

### **Where do they go? Is there anything on the other side?**

In a documentary by Lee Strobel, he interviewed Luis Palau at the end of his life. Luis was one of the greatest evangelists of all time. Through his ministry, he led over one billion people to Christ. Primarily in Latin America, crowds of hundreds of thousands came to hear him preach, but at the end of his life, he struggled and was at war in his thoughts with the devil. Satan told him, *"Here you are, after leading all these people to Jesus - you've pointed them to Heaven - but you're not going."*

Luis was tormented by these thoughts until the Holy Spirit rose up in him and said *"No! These are lies. This is not the truth. Stand on the Truth!"* As he did, he chased the devil right out of there. He told the devil, *"You're a liar - the father of it. Jesus already told me where I'm going, and that's where I'm going!"* He had to fight. If somebody like Luis Palau struggled with those questions, imagine how we feel? - how we do Life?

This study of Heaven has shifted our perspective - it's changing our lives in a good way. There needs to be seasons of adjustment to restore our balance, because we're learning and growing, and we need to focus on something like we did for six months on the Holy Spirit, and now, we're in week four of *"Heaven in the Real World"*. It's making the things of this world *"grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."*

We're finding that the more heavenly minded we are, the less concerned we are about the news of the hour. Instead, we know that we're on our way to Heaven. At the end of *this* gig, there's a better gig - there is *more* coming. How do we know that there's something on the other side? There has been much study done, especially by Pastor John Burke, who wrote a book called *"Imagine Heaven"*. He studied near-death experiences (N.D.E.'s) for thirty five years.

God, by his grace and love for us, gives us glimpses of what's to come, not only in Scripture, but by present-day accounts. One in twenty five have reported having an NDE, where they came back and said, *"I saw Him - I saw something - I encountered things."* Pastor Burke's book and his movie, *"A Case for Heaven"* provide glimpses into Heaven. He examines *"evidence that demands a verdict"* regarding whether a soul lives beyond physical death.

In all of the NDE's he studied, ninety percent of them could accurately say what was happening during their surgery or resuscitation - what they could see from outside of their bodies - the people working on them to save their lives. They shared a commonality, such as a long tunnel with a white light. Scripture says that there will be no need for light from the sun in Heaven, because God, himself, and the Lamb are the Light. (Revelations 21:23)

So, the NDE's see these bright lights, and they feel love, and their senses are heightened by a thousand times. Mountains, trees, and animals are seen and experienced, and also the great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Scripture, where they are greeted and welcomed *home*, and they're told over and over, *"You're home! You're home!"* However, twenty three percent of NDE's are actually negative in scope - where they visited hell - and those have been documented as well.

We walk by faith and not by sight, and as believers we don't have to have that to believe, but it's really nice when God, in his kindness and grace, gives us a glimpse into the other side, like he did for Tommy Watson. Why? - to encourage - to inspire - because when you live your life with Heaven in view, it inspires courage in the life we're living now on this planet.

Our hearts remember Eden, which was created as the world was supposed to be - as in Plan A, but then when the fall happened because Adam and Eve sinned - they chose in the moment temporary pleasure over eternal life - and everything changed. The world became a fallen world, and now our spirits - something in us - longs for Heaven. We say there's got to be *more* - and *there is*.

Eden is a type and shadow of Heaven - like Heaven on earth - but now, we're in this great gulf fixed between, called earth - and it's fallen. There's coming a renewal of all things. All things will be restored and renewed - a new Heaven and a new earth. That's coming, but we're not there *yet*. We're in between - but we're not *stuck* - our mentality is that we get to live here. And, we're not without direction, because we have the Bible - **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth. That's what the Bible is - it's our manual - what helps us navigate the difficulties - pain, suffering, and sorrow - but also the *victories* of this world. It's not always suffering and pain that takes us out. Fame, power, and fortune also can take us out, so we need wisdom to navigate those as well.

The Bible is God's Word for us. He gave it to us as a gift, and then said, *"I'm going to help you through this season of history."* Sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety - a hundred years on this planet are just a drop in the bucket in history. In the larger picture - the upper story (this is just a spot in the road - just one stripe on a highway that's 100,000 miles long), we put so much into the present that we miss that there's a grand and glorious future for those who are *in Christ*.

Are you in Christ? Responding to the question, *"Have you ever had an NDE?"*, Eight people raised their hands in church Sunday. We're thankful for Tommy's testimony as well. Some of the reports by people who have experienced NDE's, in addition to a calming peace, their senses were heightened.

In 1 Corinthians 13:12, the Bible says, *"we see through a glass dimly"* here on earth - like looking through a prism - that's what life sometimes feels like - where everything's warbled and out of focus. It also says *"we know in part and we prophesy in part"* (1 Corinthians 13:9). We don't have the full picture here, but every once-in-awhile we get a glimpse into the other side. That should make us go, *"Wow!"* (not, *How?*)

Colossians 3:1-4 NKJV

*"If then you were raised with Christ [born again], 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."*

Why do we do this? It *increases* our ability to navigate this life - living up in a down world - instead of living *down* in a down world. We have the ability to rise above and to realize there is something waiting for us - far more glorious - we won't see in part - we'll see *clearly*. We won't know in part - we'll *fully know* and be fully *known* by God.

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.”*

It's like crossing the finish line of this life, and running into a stadium after a cross-country race, and the stadium is filled with people cheering and shouting - they're calling your name and celebrating. Here's how to prepare in light of this knowledge of what's coming. One of the commonalities of NDE's is that they saw people on the other side and talked with them - relatives, friends, mentors, coaches - those in Christ welcomed them. They were part of that great cloud of witnesses. Now we know where we're going, and we want that to inform our courage for today - courage to share our faith with others.

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.”*

He is our *home*. Some of the NDE's were told, *“Welcome home!”* A new body is to be ours in Heaven - all things will be made new, and we'll get to experience Life fully, as it was intended from the beginning out of God's original blueprint. When we *know* who we are and where we're going, we'll know what to do, but we'll also know *how to live*. There is more to this life than living and dying - more than just trying to make it through another day - more than just surviving, because we live with *Heaven* in view. It will inform our life today. It will inspire courage in us. Be real with yourself - do you *know that you know?* - that you've given your heart to Jesus Christ?

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, and Become children of God**

This free gift of eternal life - have you made a marked turn in your life where you *know* - where you can go back to that point and say, *"I remember where I was when I believed and received - I know who I am because I've become?"* Life is fragile. If we just choose to eat, drink, and be merry - and *think* we love God, and believe *that he's good* - we neglect the reality that he's also *just* - which means that he gives us the way. Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by or through Me."*

So we go through Jesus to be reconciled to God, so that we're in that place, where we now have the gift of eternal life, which is free, and it is where we let go and say, *"I can't do this." I'm a sinner, and I've missed the mark. God, I can't do it on my own. I need Your help. I need You. I need Your gift of salvation - and I want to be a follower of Jesus. I want to be all-in and I want to give my life to You, and I want to give my life telling other people about You and this Gift."*

What if this was our last opportunity to hear this invitation? Do you know that you're ready to go - ready to meet Him? Don't put it off - don't wait. Say, *"Yes!"* to Jesus *right here - right now.*

## **Prayer**

*Father, in the name of Jesus, give me the grace by Your Holy Spirit to say "Yes" today, and step over the line to become a child of God - to follow You. Scripture says that God so loved me that He gave His only begotten Son for me - that if I will believe in Him - that I can receive the gift of eternal life and be with Him forever. There will be purpose to everything that I'll be doing in this next life - there will be things to do - and it will be glorious.*

*Father God, thank You for the gift of salvation. I confess to You that I have sinned. I have fallen short of the glory of God. I repent of my sin. I choose to turn to Jesus and away from my old life. I want to be born again. I want the free gift of salvation. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and I receive the gift of eternal life - and I am now becoming a child of God. Thank You for saving me.*

*We love You, and Lord, we choose - we are commissioned to go out with our leaky buckets and make beautiful messes with people we encounter. Thank You for this time together. In Jesus' name. Amen*